

SALVADORAN REFUGEES:  
A CASE STUDY OF STRESS AND COPING

by

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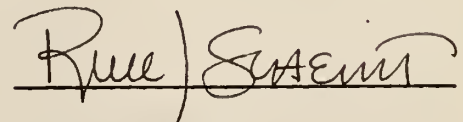
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## Introduction

### Background

Throughout history, humanity has been characterized by migratory movements. The effects of these migrations have been felt by all nations, with major ones usually occurring as a result of political, social and/or economic instability.

The United States of America (U.S.A.) has seen several massive migrations. In the twentieth century, there have been three: one in the early 1900's, one after World War II, and one that has been in progress for the past twenty years. This last migration has been unique in that a high proportion of people seeking asylum arrive in the United States due to political instability in their own countries (Carillo, 1980; Fazlollah, 1984; Kerpen, 1984; Lin, Masuda, & Tazuma, 1982; Mohn, 1983).

Persons entering the United States during this migration have been labelled political refugees, or merely, refugees. The United Nations 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, as amended by the 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees, defines a refugee as a person who

owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or owing to such fear, is

unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country. (Newland, 1981, p. 7)

Both the United Nations and the Refugee Act of 1980 definitions of refugee are basically the same:

The term refugee means ... any person who is outside any country of such person's nationality ... and who is unable or unwilling to return to ... that country because of persecution or a well-founded fear of persecution on account of race, religion, nationality, membership in particular social group, or political opinion.... (DeVecchi, 1983, p. 10)

However, there is divergence of opinion on the restrictiveness or openness of the U.S.A. Refugee Act of 1980. Undocumented political refugees are not granted asylum by the U.S.A. unless proof of persecution is given. Meanwhile, they are considered economic migrants who have entered the country to look for a job. Salvadoran refugees, specifically, are not granted asylum by the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS). They are considered illegal aliens in this country.

The refusal by the U.S.A. to grant official asylum to Salvadoran refugees is currently explained on the basis of the high number seeking refuge. In the opinion of Jaeger (1983) "international institutions and current legal instruments were not meant to deal with such large numbers" (p. 8). Hull (1981) holds the view, logically, that, "small numbers of newcomers can be absorbed into the 'family' so long as homeostasis is not challenged". Hull also believes that, "at

some critical point the number or impact of outsiders can be potent enough to threaten the majority ..." (pp. 250-251). In the opinion of DeVecchi (1983), the U.S.A. is not bound by law (i.e., the Refugee Act of 1980) to accept for settlement any or all who meet the definition of refugee, reserving the right to accept only those it deems to be of special humanitarian concern.

At present, the United States is one of the few places in the Western hemisphere offering any opportunity for refugee survival, in particular, Salvadoran refugees. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimates at 500,000 the number of Salvadorans fleeing their homeland since 1979 (Mohn, 1983). The INS has estimated at nearly 300,000 those taking refuge in this country. The UNHCR has operated refugee camps in Honduras (for 7,000 to 10,000 refugees up to 1983) and Mexico has given asylum to undetermined numbers. Neither of these two countries is prepared to cope with the problem since each is currently experiencing political, economic, and social hardships (Fazlollah, 1984; Schmidt, 1984).

The U.S. government makes efforts to be fair, but contradictions occur. The INS deports most of the Central American refugees arrested. Golden (1983) reveals that between 1981 and 1983 almost 25,000 arrests have been made. Fazlollah (1984) reports that by 1982, 11,000 of those refugees deported were Salvadorans.



Certain investigations point to the fate of the deportees. Mohn (1983) cites Benpane of California State University as saying that somewhere between five and ten percent of deportees are executed on return to their home country. Namuth (1983) cites Schey, Executive Director of the National Center of Immigrants' Rights, Inc., Los Angeles, California, as having cross-referenced the names of 6,000 Salvadoran deportees with lists of individuals tortured, killed, or missing, adding that the deportee is generally viewed with suspicion by the Security Forces and right-wing death squads in El Salvador.

Both religious and human rights organizations continue to complain about the U.S.A. immigration policies and procedures, as well as the provision of U.S. military aid to the Salvadoran government. One action taken by religious congregations has been to offer shelter to refugees who are waiting for deportation hearings. In cases like this, refugees that have been apprehended by Immigration officials are released on payment of bond. The religious congregation has agreed to pay for the refugees' release, guaranteeing Immigration officials that the refugees will be present the day of the hearings. In the meantime, the refugees are offered shelter while a legal agency works on the applications for resettlement in another country, most commonly, Canada. During this period, the refugees can work - although not officially permitted - without any of the usual work benefits, in other words, the refugees work at their own risk.



Scientific interest in the impact of migration on the individual started during the 1930's (Roskies, 1978), but investigations in Israel, England, Switzerland, Canada, and Australia, dealt almost exclusively with the mental health of the migrant, such as maladaptation due to depression, anxiety, psychosomatic disease, or schizophrenia. However, some studies on the adaptation process focused on social network support, feelings of loss, economic hardship, employment opportunities, separation from family, and the language barrier.

In reference to the U.S.A., accumulated experience about recent massive immigration has been with Mexicans, Cubans, and Southeast Asians. The present thesis is directed towards another important group, the migration of Central American refugees, about whom there is scant information. As Carillo (1980) points out, there is need to assess the personal and interpersonal effects of separation from and loss of family, community and mother country, and also the effects of alienation, fear, loneliness, role changes and value conflicts experienced by refugees from this part of America.

### Review of the Literature

Kunz (1973) divides human migratory movements into two general patterns: anticipatory movements and acute movements. The first

occur, as the term implies, in anticipation of deteriorating circumstances, the individuals arriving in the foster country somewhat prepared for the changes to be faced. In acute movements the individuals leave under great pressure and arrive unprepared for the challenges posed by the new country. An intermediate type of movement has characteristics of the above two. For Kunz, the anticipatory type bodes well for satisfactory resettlement, while in the acute type the refugee might be expected to face more difficulties in adjustment. Montero (1979) describes a pattern, shown by the Vietnamese and, perhaps, applicable to Central Americans and others under the same circumstances, which he calls spontaneous international migration. He divides the pattern into five stages: a) abrupt departure with little or no preparation, b) a stay in temporary camps, c) securing private sponsorship, d) tendency toward secondary migration to ethnic enclaves, and e) assimilation into the host society. The past decade has seen increased interest of professionals in studying the various aspects of the refugee problem in the United States. Most studies have dealt with legally admitted Southeast Asians (especially Vietnamese), Cubans, and illegal Mexican laborers. Before that, published studies dealt mainly with the pathologic aspects of maladaptation, with little interest being placed on the stress produced during the adaptation process of the immigrant to the new environment and the mechanisms employed in coping with the stress.

Stress. David (1970) describes migration as "an interruption and frustration of natural life expectations, with all the related anxieties and potential damage to the self concept" (p. 79).

Migration, he says, induces cognitive stress, forcing the immigrant to change familiar images and build a new cognitive map. Dodge (1973) and Roskies (1978) point to the stress of migration, but also to the lack of agreement regarding the most stressful stages of adaptation.

In their study of Vietnamese in the United States, Lin et al. (1982) observed that three years after arrival the majority of refugees were more or less settled. However, looking at previous clinical and field experience, they found that depression and anxiety could worsen with time as a result of the "losses" experienced, as well as "culture shock", which contributed to a gradual increase in cases needing attention by mental health workers. In their opinion, the increase in depression and anxiety was caused by accumulation of stress due to new behavior yet to be learned and new situations to be coped with. Among North African immigrants to Canada, Lasry (1977) found that initially high stress scores became lower after up to eight years of residence. However, with Portuguese immigrants to Canada, Roskies (1978) did not observe a significant relation between symptom scores and duration of residence. Most of the adjustment appeared to take place soon after arrival.

No agreement exists, either, on the predisposition to mental illness in refugees who have experienced much stress. Some psychiatrists believe that predisposed individuals would manifest psychological symptoms such as neurosis in spite of the presence of a stressful situation. According to Hocking (1981), "this form of reasoning stems from the ignorance induced by an almost total absence of knowledge of the late social, occupational and psychological effects in individuals who have survived situations involving great physical danger and psychological stress" (p.215). Hocking believes these psychiatrists have forgotten the "biological stress to which the individual has been exposed" (p. 216).

Hocking states that "the greater the stress ..., the closer the individual is brought to the limit of ... stress tolerance, and the greater is the possibility of breakdown when exposed to further stress" (p. 217). He explains:

when individuals are subjected to a prolonged threat to their survival, the evidence suggests that pre-existing personality characteristics resulting from inherited and earlier environmental experiences, are replaced by a universal and basic biological reaction. The symptom complex that constitutes this reaction, and the social, family, occupational, intellectual and emotional changes that result from it, form the burden which migrants who have survived extreme stress experiences take with them to their country of adoption. (p. 217)

Hocking further states that unless there is some indication of the type and the degree of stress involved in an experience, individuals cannot be divided into "normal" and "predisposed".

Researchers tend to consider refugees as a high risk group for mental problems. Lin et al. (1982) mention individuals lacking group support, those with "limited previous exposure to Western culture" (p. 179), or those having suffered significant losses, as high risks. Nguyen (1982) identifies seven such refugee groups: single adults of age 19-35, single female heads of families, male heads of families of age 36-55, refugees over 55, unaccompanied minors, refugees from remote rural areas, and refugees of small ethnic groups. Yet, Roskies (1978), in her work with Portuguese refugees in Canada, found that "although immigration led to increased change, it did not lead necessarily to increased illness.... It might have pathogenic effects, but there was no simple cause-effect relationship" (p. 5). On this basis, Roskies does not consider all immigrants at high risk for illness.

Individuals may manifest stress through somatizations. This somatization may be of varied nature. Thus, Yampey (1981) in his work with Paraguayan refugees in Argentina, reports a predominance of bodily derangements such as "cardiac neurosis" and faintings. Cardiac neurosis is described as a state of great anguish preceded by sudden tachycardia or a nervous crisis, either spontaneous or provoked, such as when informed of the death of a close friend or relative. The person describes the anguish as a "blow". Carillo (1980) mentions the presence of a post-torture syndrome, as well as dysfunctions such as insomnia, enuresis (involuntary urination), somnambulism, and paranoia, among others.



There is evidence of racial variations in the somatization of stress (Kalimo, Bice, & Novosel, 1970). Lasry (1977) conducted a comparative study of his data on a community survey of North African immigrants in Montreal, to other studies who used the Langner scale (an index of mental health) on different ethnic groups, and observed that North African, French Canadian, and Mexican immigrants exhibited about twice as many psychosomatic problems than a group of English Canadian immigrants. Lasry states, "the clinical intuition that Latins and Mediterraneans have a tendency to somatize more than Anglophone is then borne out by the facts" (p. 53).

There is the possibility of a sex difference in somatization of stress among refugees. Roskies, Iida-Miranda and Strobel (1975), in a study of the applicability of a life-events approach in understanding the difficulties of immigration, indicate that women form a distinct population from men in terms of mean illness scores and life change values. However, these authors consider that their observation may not be generally applicable, due to idiosyncrasy of the sample used in the study.

Stressors. Stressors are defined here as the events that cause stress in the life of the individual. In relation to refugees, stressors are of varied nature. Nguyen (1982) lists some, which, although referring to Vietnamese, may apply equally to Salvadorans: long political turmoil in the home country, lack of job skills to facilitate or broaden employment opportunities, hazards of escape,

scattering or dissemination of other fellow refugees over the adopted country, social and cultural changes, and absence or loss of support networks. Yampey (1981) adds language; changes in employment; changes in habits, customs, and roles; in some refugees, adjustment to urban life; status aspirations in a foreign land; and re-evaluation of personal, family, and community ideologies.

Separation from relatives constitutes a significant stressor.

Rottman and Meredith (1982) observe:

Uncertainty plays a major role when questions like these arise: 'Who is now dead and who is alive?' or 'Will I see my spouse or children or parents again?' These feelings of uncertainty are often translated into a deep sense of shame referred to as 'survivor guilt'. .... Considerable energy is spent by some refugees worrying about the safety and material comfort of friends and relatives left behind. (p. 581)

The loss of the sense of security, self-identity, and even self-esteem is important (Nguyen, 1982). Larue (1982) emphasizes the importance of self-esteem in the immigrant. In particular, the help of ethnic communities in aiding the refugee to keep his sense of self-worth, psychological strength, and satisfaction. Murphy (1977) notes that when the refugee keeps the belief that the move will be temporary, with return to the original society foreseen, less likelihood of mental disturbance results than if the refugee feels that the decisions made will have permanent consequences, notably permanent loss of contact with relatives and friends.



The alteration of family roles may be an important stressor. Lin et al. (1982) observe that although refugee spouses

are often desperately in need of each other, they may be so exhausted and feel so vulnerable, that it becomes difficult for them to sustain emotional support with each other.... The breakdown of the extended family system deprived married couples of an important buffering and protective network, exposing them directly to environmental stresses which are exceedingly taxing to them. (p. 177)

Lin et al. also noted the increased frequency of physical violence and threat of divorce.

The majority of refugees live under marginal circumstances. Usually, they are either unemployed or underemployed and they have limited language competence or marketable skills (Kim, 1980). They encounter difficulties due to the lack of adequate employment. Some of the problems are caused by lack of jobs appropriate to the individual's skill or previous experience, to non-availability or scarcity of jobs, layoffs, or low pay (Meredith & Cramer, 1981). They also face problems on the job, caused by intercultural differences (Nguyen, 1982). Zwingmann (1977) points to nostalgia as a factor affecting working efficiency, and suggests that employers should note major events, such as birthdays and national celebrations, to give the refugee a sense of familiarity. Zwingmann adds that a word of encouragement or a small friendly gesture might be sufficient to minimize nostalgic reactions and their consequences, such as absenteeism and alcohol abuse. Dodge (1973) maintains that either

real or imagined discrimination on the job and elsewhere, "is probably one of the most significant stress-provoking factors leading to a breakdown in the normal adaptation to a new environment; of the different areas in which discrimination may operate, job discrimination is generally the most serious" (p. 370).

Language differences and resulting communication difficulties, may constitute an important stressor, particularly with respect to relations with sponsors and at work. Meredith and Cramer (1981) consider language differences an underlying cause of many financial problems since jobs are limited, and thus, the refugee lacks an adequate income. Language barriers are complicated by the greater difficulty of adults in learning a new language and by the lack of availability of language teaching facilities.

Coping. The refugee undergoes an adaptive process in the new environment. Hertz (1981), Nguyen (1982), and Yampey (1970) tend to agree on four stages in the process. There is an initial stage of euphoria about being in the new country, followed by an initial adaptation where the refugee tries to master new, job-related skills. Later comes acceptance of the situation and finally, the stage of adaptation. Nguyen considers that these stages take place during a specific period of time, the first during the first month of arrival, the second occurs two to six months later, and the third, six months to three years later, with equilibrium attained in about five years.

Factors facilitating the adaptation of the refugee to his new environment are called coping mechanisms. The literature (Dodge, 1973; Harel, 1977; Hertz, 1981; Lin et al., 1982; Meredith & Cramer, 1981; Nguyen, 1982; Zwingmann, 1977) cites five such mechanisms as critical for successful adaptation: proper environment; religion; help given to relatives remaining in the native country; preservation of cultural tradition; and nostalgia.

In the opinion of David (1970), the community

must be prepared to allow the migrant time to learn, by trial and error, before he can be expected to assume a role and social identity meaningful in terms of the new society.... Adaptation is not a well-ordered temporal sequence of phases of adjustment, but a fluid exchange between the immigrant and society. (p. 87)

For Pfister-Ammende (1977) the environment should offer:

the opportunity for establishing a personal sphere that allows the 'privacy of one's own four walls', the family, the 'little things' which, objectively small, represent emotional values of importance; work, if possible, of free choice, and the opportunity for material and spiritual ties with a community where a mutual relationship of security and sense of belonging develops. (p. 17)

Support groups, consisting either of people from the same ethnic origin, or of natives from the host country, play a key function in coping. Dodge (1973), Eisenstadt (1953), Nguyen (1982), and Yampey (1981) concur on the role of support groups. Murphy (1977) states that they even help deter schizophrenia, arteriosclerosis and stress diseases.

Harel (1977) has examined the role of religion in overcoming the stress of immigration, citing the creation of the modern state of Israel as an example of how the psychological-spiritual factor contributed to successful adjustment of the refugee. In Harel's opinion, religion is also an insulating factor against frustration. Ideology seems helpful in order to organize the information available regarding plans for permanent resettlement in Israel. "When ideology is faced with pragmatic, objective hardships", he says, "ideology wins" (p. 206). To Pfister-Ammende (1977) the refugee tends to form a spiritual bond born of "a deep commitment to an idea of religious, political and humanitarian nature" (p. 9). Such individuals are "able to find a deep meaning even in their present transitory existence; they are sustained by a genuine sense of commitment, they find sense and meaning everywhere by working and living for the realization of their idea" (p. 9).

Beliefs or ideologies help coping through what Lazarus (1966) calls "cognitive appraisal", a mechanism capable of neutralizing the impact of an event by minimizing the danger and bolstering confidence in mastering certain tasks. Although applicable to persons in all stages of life, but possibly of major importance for refugees, the factor of "meaning" (i.e., the attitude of a person towards an experience) helps adjustment by making sense out of the change (Marris, 1974). Pearlin and Schooler (1978) also consider that a

coping strategy helpful in buffering stress is "controlling the meaning" of the situation, the way an experience is recognized and the extent of the threat it poses can cognitively and perceptually neutralize the stress of a situation. Olson, McCubbin, Barnes, Larsen, Muxen, and Wilson (1983) employ the term "reframing" to describe an internal strategy used by families when coping with stress. Reframing is defined as the "ability to redefine a demanding situation in a more rational and acceptable way in order to make the situation more manageable" (p. 143).

The concept of "coherence" has been used by Antonovsky (1977) to emphasize the importance of beliefs to individuals in coping with stress and adapting to change. Coherence is defined by Antonovsky as:

a global orientation that expresses the extent to which one has a pervasive, enduring though dynamic feeling of confidence that one's internal and external environments are predictable and that there is a high probability that things will work out as well as can reasonably be expected. (p. 123)

Antonovsky emphasizes that this sense is shaped and tested throughout the life of the individual, giving him stability and continuity, but that it will not necessarily always fulfill his expectations. Olson et al. (1983) point to the difference between Antonovsky's sense of coherence, and Lazarus' cognitive appraisal. Coherence incorporates the belief that fatalism is important, while cognitive appraisal stresses the importance of being in control.



Olson et al. define fatalism as: "knowing when certain events are beyond one's control and accepting this with minimal discomfort" (p. 143). In their study of acculturation of Spanish-speaking immigrants to the U.S., Marden and Meyer (1973) observed that the Mexican-American subculture is characterized by fatalism, an attitude which reflects in large measure the history of suffering under Spanish feudalism, under oppression in Mexico, and discrimination in the United States. A similar observation has been made by Lin et al. (1982) with Vietnamese refugees who exhibit fatalism as one of the four strategies used for coping. According to these authors, this situation is deeply rooted in both Buddhist tradition and thirty years of continuous war.

Life is seen as unpredictable; disasters can happen anytime and they should be accepted and tolerated. You plan and work hard, but it is up to heaven to decide whether you will succeed or not. There is, however, no pessimism in such an attitude. (p. 181)

When not carried to an extreme, fatalism "can be particularly useful for people suffering the pain of the refugee experience" (p. 181).

Helping relatives that have remained back home, and effort at reunion, constitute coping strategies. Rottman and Meredith (1982) observe that Indochinese refugees send money home, or if the "extended family ... lives in the United States they will move in order to be closer ... and thus achieve a feeling of closer to home" (p. 581). Lin et al. (1982) consider the Vietnamese as particularly tenacious in

pursuing a reunion with relatives. Those who realize that reunion is not possible, choose to mail material goods regularly in spite of their poor financial situation. "It provides them with a feeling of continuing relatedness, a feeling that at the very least they can still share something with their loved ones" (p. 181).

The importance of keeping traditions as a way of coping has not received much attention. Meredith and Cramer (1981) mention the possible role which traditions play in adjustment of Indochinese refugees. Often sponsors realize the need to maintain their links with the past, such as playing native music, preparing native dishes, and celebrating ethnic holidays.

Nostalgic reactions, as an expression of a coping mechanism, have been studied by Zwingmann (1977). According to him, they are characterized as a "psychological representation of the milieu left behind, and the wish to return to it" (p. 142). Carried to extreme, nostalgic reactions can be considered an illness, in which nostalgic individuals present somatic symptoms "even after several months of intensive retrospective" (p. 149). They isolate themselves from the environment, and may engage in asocial activities to relieve tension. Such cases, Zwingmann maintains, need to be viewed together with family background because they are an expression of an

"unhappy home where the child never had the possibility to form affective bonds and never had the experience of security.... It is not the home for which the person longs,



but it is the threat of the new situation which pushes [the individual] back toward the home as the only refuge".(p. 146)

However, nostalgia need not be seen as abnormal. It is even needed because it gives emotional continuity during adaptation to the new environment. In the process of adaptation, conflict is unavoidable, as is the need to find acceptance in the new group. Part of the nostalgic reactions is what Zwingmann calls the "nostalgic illusion" or idealization of the past and simultaneous downgrading of the new environment where everything in the home country was more beautiful, more tasteful than in the new country.

### The Present Study

As the previous section indicates, researchers have shown an increasing interest in understanding the dimensions of transcultural migration which specifically affect refugees. The present researcher became interested in the experiences particular to Central American refugees through an awareness of the increasing numbers of such refugees entering the United States and the increased publicity regarding their plight. Increased attention upon refugees' experiences is evidenced by media accounts, civil rights protests on behalf of refugees, sanctuary movements, and other activities offering shelter to refugees.

The present case study was motivated by a desire to understand more about the circumstances of Central American refugee immigration

and about the stresses and uncertainties created by their unresolved residence status. Toward this end, nine domains of stress affecting refugees were investigated. The stressor domains were adopted from the previously reviewed research literature as well as from pilot interviews conducted with a Guatemalan family residing in the Midwest.

The domains of stress are:

1. Separation from relatives
2. Changes in family roles
3. Underemployment/Unemployment
4. Discrimination
5. Knowledge of the English language
6. Cultural differences
7. Uncertainty about the future
8. Fear of arrest
9. Dependency

In addition, the present study attempts to determine the ways in which refugees adjust or adapt to the stressors in these nine domains.

In order to accomplish these exploratory goals, focused interviews were conducted with a married couple from El Salvador residing under the protection of church sponsors. Nonquantitative content analyses of the verbal reports were conducted to derive inferences about the impact of these stressors upon these persons; adjustive responses exhibited by the couple in response to these stressors were also identified in these verbal reports. The following

chapter details the conceptual definitions and rationale supporting the selection of the nine stressor domains, describes the selection of respondents (including their background), and details contact procedures and specific interview items used to operationalize the stress domains. The results chapter presents a detailed summary of respondents' reactions to each stress areas. Finally, the last chapter offers suggestions for interventive strategies which might be applied to prevent or ameliorate the impact of these stressors upon others in similar circumstances.

## Method

### Background

Knowledge about what refugees experience in the effort to adapt to a new situation and to an uncertain future must be obtained by close contact with actual refugees. However, locating individuals or families willing to lend themselves to study is difficult since they are primarily concerned with their safety. The most viable way to approach them is through sponsors giving them aid and shelter. Even so, there may be resistance and lack of trust from the refugees.

The attitude of the refugees toward the researcher and the strategy of approach employed to gain their cooperation will determine success in obtaining information. Kerpen (1984) has described an appropriate one for legal Vietnamese refugees. He says:

Reiteration of confidentiality and careful selection of questions needed to obtain truly essential data, while respecting privacy, can ease the fears of the refugees in this regard.... Refugees balk at offering information, often for political reasons.... They resist discussing past relationships, income or other information considered totally private for fear it will be used against them at some time, in some fashion. (p. 11)

Refugees from El Salvador are not spread in a geographically uniform way across the United States. At the time of the present study there were few under church sponsorship in the Midwestern state where the study was conducted. Thus, in order to obtain candidates for the study, numerous sources had to be contacted, including sources outside the state.

A young married man from El Salvador was contacted in June of 1984 and agreed to cooperate. By that time, he was expecting the arrival of his wife from El Salvador. The present thesis is based on this couple. To assure confidentiality, actual names have been withheld and only pseudonyms employed for the refugees and for all other persons involved.

Carlos, the husband, was 20 years-old, and Marta, his wife, was 19 years-old. A 17 year-old sister of the husband, Sara, accompanied them, but she was uncooperative from the start; however, she will be mentioned in several instances throughout the study. Carlos and Sara arrived undocumented in the United States in January, 1984. Carlos was arrested in Texas but released on bond. Sara was not arrested due to her young age. Marta also arrived undocumented in July, 1984 but was not arrested. Immigration officials do not arrest refugee women who travel alone due to the lack of facilities to place them.

They all came from a small rural town in El Salvador and were living in a large Midwestern city under the sponsorship of a religious organization. Their families were of a low socio-economic level. At the time of departure from El Salvador, Carlos was unemployed, and Marta and Sara were studying to be nurses. When Carlos was contacted, he was working in construction and Sara was studying High School. After Marta arrived to the United States, she did not work. She did enroll in some night courses in English.

The three of them resided in the house of an American couple who offered shelter. Meanwhile, a legal agency was in the process of obtaining legal residence for them in Canada. The residency in Canada was finally granted in October, 1984. They left the United States in December, 1984.

Telephone conversations and personal interviews were employed to gather information related to their experiences with the nine stress areas and ways of coping with them. A "focused interview" format (Selltiz, Wrightsman & Cook, 1976) was employed, using a combination of open-ended and closed questions (See Appendix A).

The type of interview adopted was what Williamson, Karp, Dalphin, and Gray (1982) refer to as "customized", in which when the respondent shows special interest in a question, the topic is probed extensively using other questions that are either prepared in advance or devised immediately by the interviewer. Such interviews depend on the rapport, mutuality of trust, and sense of reciprocity that can be developed between researcher and respondents during their transition from strangers to confidants of a sort.

Following the recommendations of Kerpen (1984), the researcher made an effort to help the couple feel comfortable so that they would be as responsive as possible, willing to share frank revelations, to be alert, creative, and to make a constant effort not to deviate from the topic under discussion.



The interview questions were first written in Spanish and later translated to English. The questions, in their Spanish version, were pretested to assure their clarity of ideas by using words and expressions common to Salvadorans. Due to their geographical proximity to El Salvador and their availability to the researcher at that time, three college graduate students from Guatemala suggested new words and different sentence construction to attain this clarity of ideas. The questions were designed to serve as guides for an in-depth discussion of each stress area. Thus, many questions were not administered in sequence.

An attempt was made to assess the stressors in terms of a "past-present-future" time-frame. The past included approximately six months to a year before emigration from El Salvador. The present covered the period from arrival in the U.S.A. to the time of the interview. The future referred to the lapse following the interview until departure for Canada.

### Stress Areas

The areas of stress, with supporting rationale and examples of pertinent interview questions follow below.

#### Separation from relatives

Definition. This refers to the separation from those close individuals who were left behind in the homeland. Included are



parents, spouse, brothers and sisters, other blood relatives, and close friends.

Rationale. As stated in the literature, "Latins are family oriented" (Lein, 1982, p.37) being the mother an important figure, offering support and love to its members (Lein; Yamepy, 1981). This is reason to believe that separation from relatives is an important source of stress due to the close-knit family ties that persist in Latin America.

Example questions:

Past: When you decided to leave your country, how did your relatives or close friends feel or react about it?

Probe: Did they agree or disagree? Did they help in reaching a decision? Did they try to convince you to stay?

Present: How often do your relatives come to your mind? What goes through your mind when thinking about your relatives?

Future: Do you have plans to help your relatives in the future? If "yes", what plans do you have?

### Changes in family roles

Definition. Privileges and responsibilities ("rights and duties") of every member in a family have to be defined in order to avoid feelings of loss of control and confusion.

Rationale. Refugee families often have to make adjustments in regard to their rights and duties inside the family (Larue, 1982; Lin

et al., 1982; Rottman & Meredith, 1982). Forceful displacement to an environment with different culture and traditions may signify changes in definition of roles that will affect the process of adaptation.

Example questions: (Only the present was assessed)

Present: Since you have been in the U.S.A., have there been any role changes such as that of spouse, wage earner, decision maker, or head of family?

#### Underemployment/unemployment

Definition. This refers to failure to earn money to meet needs or to being underpaid because of lack of skills, discrimination, or illegal status in the country which reduces the opportunities for better employment.

Rationale. The lack of adequate income to meet the needs of the family is one of the most important stressors to a refugee.

Example questions:

Past: When you were in El Salvador, what type of job did you have in mind getting in the United States?

Present: Are you working at present? If "yes", what type of job do you have? Are you working: once in a while; part-time; full-time? If you work part-time, do you hold more than one job?

Future: Are you concerned about getting a job in the future?

### Discrimination

Definition. For this study discrimination is defined as the refugees' perception of negative attitudes and actions, rejection, unfair treatment, and/or limitation of opportunities toward them, due to bias about nationality, race, or religion.

Rationale. Discrimination against refugees, whether real or imagined, creates mixed feelings toward the host country stressful to the refugee.

Example questions: (Only the present was assessed)

Present: When you arrived in the United States, how were you treated by those with whom you came in contact? Will you mention instances in which you were treated well? Tell about instances when you were not treated well.

### Knowledge of the English language

Definition. This refers to the difficulty in communicating orally or in writing, in the host country.

Rationale. Without knowledge of the language of the host country, especially of the spoken language, the refugee with little education and skills, finds it stressful to communicate, to find a job, to learn skills, placing successful adaptation in jeopardy.

Example questions: (Only the past and the present were assessed)

Past: Once you decided you were coming to the United States, were you concerned about:

a) reading the language: much; some; little; none?  
(Probe).

b) speaking the language: much; some; little; none?  
(Probe).

c) writing the language: much; some; little; none?  
(Probe).

d) understanding the language: much; some; little;  
none? (Probe).

Present: Are there moments when you wish you knew  
English better? If "yes", give details.

### Cultural differences

Definition. Cultural differences become evident in areas such as taste for foods, child rearing, religion, the role of women in society, social relations, marital relations, and money management.

Rationale. Part of the process of adaptation may lie in the acceptance by the refugee of the cultural differences in areas such as the ones just mentioned above.

Example questions: (The questions were not designed with a time-frame)

Could you state any differences between the way you think and the way Americans think in relation to (marriage, child rearing practices, money management, etc.)? What are your ideas? How do you feel about these differences?  
(Probe).

### Uncertainty about the future

Definition. The sense of vagueness which a refugee may feel is accentuated by the uncertainties ahead. All the stressors considered here would contribute to the sensation.

Rationale. Uncertainty about factors such as the fate of relatives, employment opportunities, and residency status constitute a source of stress. For the refugee, they may be a prime factor in the efforts to adapt to the new environment.

Example questions: (Questions about the past refer to feelings of uncertainty while the refugees were still in El Salvador; questions about the present refer to feelings of uncertainty after arriving in the United States.)

Past: What did you hope to achieve upon coming to the United States?

Present: Do you have any plans to obtain the legal status? Will you give details?

### Fear of arrest

Definition. Refugees from Central America have been particularly sought by the U.S. government, with arrest most surely leading to deportation.

Rationale. Exposure to arrest and deportation constitutes one of the most important sources of anxiety to an undocumented alien, causing continuous tension, with the implication of suffering physical and psychological violence upon arrival in the home country.

Example questions:

Past: Before you left El Salvador, how much of a concern was it for you that you might not be allowed to stay in this country: none; some; much?

Present: Now that you have been in the United States for some time, how much concern do you have that you might have to leave this country: much; some; little?

Dependency

Definition. This may be defined as obligatory reliance on sponsors for dwelling, food, clothing, work, legal service, transportation, and everyday needs.

Rationale. Having to depend on unrelated individuals and organizations for practically every need may be a cause of strain for certain persons.

Example questions: (Only the present was assessed)

Present: How do you feel about having to depend on this family (the one giving shelter) and on the benevolence of many other people? Do you feel comfortable?

Procedure

First contact was made over the telephone with Carlos, the husband. At the time, he was staying in the same city where the interviews were to be held later, with Brother M. (a religious servant professing perpetual vows, but not entitled to confess, celebrate



Mass, baptize or perform weddings; rather, he was entitled only to give testimony of evangelical life). Sara, his sister, was staying with a neighbor family. Another Salvadoran was staying with Brother M., but he refused to cooperate for fear of deportation or persecution. Carlos and Sara had been in the Midwest for six months and were waiting for Marta, the wife, to arrive from El Salvador.

During this initial contact, the motives of the study were explained. Carlos was willing to express his views about politics in his country, but he was informed that there was no interest in political information or discussion for this study. He was also informed that all data collected would be confidential, including names.

Following the first telephone call in June, 1984, two more calls were made, one by the end of June, the other in July, 1984. By this time, Marta had arrived from El Salvador. The first interview was set for September, 1984 (See Appendix B).

Telephone conversations with Carlos followed the interview with the purpose of updating information and maintaining the interest of the couple (See Appendixes C and D).

The second interview was conducted in November, 1984 (See Appendix E). A final telephone conversation was held a month later. By this time the refugees were soon to leave for Canada (See Appendix F).

Carlos and Marta were receptive from the start. He was always talkative, fully cooperative, leading in the conversations and even



answering for wife and sister when they were questioned, to the point that he sometimes had to be restrained. Marta was warm and friendly, more so during the second interview. Her rather distracted attitude during the first interview was later explained by her early pregnancy. Sara was present at both interviews, but did not participate. Her gestures expressed lack of interest; she even fell asleep during the first. In spite of prodding, Carlos had to answer for her. The first meeting was rather restrained; the second was so relaxed that the couple insisted on an additional one. The difference between the first and second interviews was probably due to the fact that at the second they already knew of their acceptance in Canada and their impending departure. Absence of the landlords from the house on that occasion may have also contributed to the relaxed atmosphere.

#### Analysis of the Data

Due to the exploratory nature of the study a qualitative content analysis of the interviews was employed. The researcher analyzed the responses according to the stress areas assessed and to the coping mechanisms employed by the subjects.

The presentation of the findings follows the sequence of stressors presented in this section. For each stress area, the researcher uses specific statements of the respondents to report and evaluate the findings. The mechanisms used by these individuals to cope with the potential stressors are then described, again using the subjects' responses as primary data.

## Results: Analysis of Stressors

The raw interview data appear in Appendixes B to F. The material has been translated literally from Spanish in order to preserve as much as possible the traditional language expressions used in El Salvador. Also, the translations help to express the informal manner in which the interviews were carried out, following Kerpen's (1984) recommendations on the technique of approach to respondents, that is, to help respondents feel comfortable during the interviews. In this manner, the respondents are more willing to share frank revelations and are more alert.

Although the auspicious welcome of the couple helped in obtaining valuable information about their experience as refugees, the researcher believes that further detailing of the many aspects of their experience in the United States could have been obtained. The main reasons for not obtaining further details were the distance involved in reaching them and the time restriction imposed by their urgency to reach a legal haven. Also, more information could have been added to the work if individual interviews had been conducted, and if the effort to obtain the cooperation of Sara had been successful. However, the researcher believes that the validity of the study is not affected by these limitations.

### Analysis of the Stressors

The subjects showed evidence of having experienced stress during their months as refugees in the United States. The characteristics of

this stress may be defined by extracting from the interviews those points referring to each of the selected stressors.

Separation from relatives. In order to analyze the effect of separation from relatives on the refugees, the emphasis of the analysis was placed on such points as life in the home country, reasons for emigrating, family relations after arriving in the U.S., and communication with the family after emigration.

The couple in this study came from a rural community in El Salvador close to a guerrilla war zone. Carlos, the husband, belonged to a poor family. At the time of the study his immediate relatives were his father, 60, his mother, 40, two brothers and three sisters. Carlos was the fourth child and the youngest male. Another sibling, the eldest male, had been killed in a car accident two years earlier. Sara, who emigrated with Carlos, was the eldest of the three girls. The other two brothers, together with an aunt and cousins, were already in Canada. The maternal grandmother and four uncles completed the family unit.

The father had been a mason, but had retired (in Carlos' words, he "had got tired of working") and worked a small farm. The mother had served as a maid, but eventually acquired a stall at the market place and became the family provider. Four of the siblings had finished the ninth grade. Carlos was the only one to finish high school. Eventually, all the males acquired government jobs. The eldest, who died, had been traffic policeman for eight years. The

second had served in the Armed Forces. The third had been in the National Guard.

Carlos finished high school with a major in accounting and business administration. (In El Salvador, study for a high school diploma can also involve study for a specific trade.) After graduating, his mother supported Carlos for an additional year of study in communications. Failing to find a job, he entered the Security Forces, a branch of the government in charge of national security.

The death of the eldest brother with subsequent loss of his economic help, and the escalation of civil war, prompted the emigration of the other two brothers. The elder one reached Canada and sent for the other brother with his wife. The two also helped other relatives, an aunt and some cousins, to depart. In Canada, the two brothers were studying, but had borrowed sufficient money to pay for passage of the other relatives.

Upon enlisting, Carlos went into military school, but soon realized that army life was not for him. He went on sick leave and spent seven months with his parents, helping on the small farm. Eventually, with money sent from Canada, he travelled by bus with Sara via Guatemala and Mexico. They entered through the Texas border and with the help of a church congregation, finally arrived the Mid-western city where they would live for one year.

Less detail was available about Marta's family background. She was fourth in line of six siblings. Her father had died four years

before. When interviewed, the couple apparently wished to avoid talking about the incident. From remarks during the first interview, it appears that he was serving in the army as a civilian. His actual job, never clearly explained, required that he often travel away from home. The eldest brother lived with a common-law wife and earned very little. Thus, the mother's situation, with four children, was difficult. Marta was completing her last year of high school, majoring in nursing, when they decided to marry and then emigrate.

Marta, a bride of two months, was left with her in-laws. Her relationship with her own mother had always been strained. In her account, her mother was domineering and used physical punishment for any misdeed. In spite of her own poverty, the mother was described as a proud person. She looked down on Carlos as coming from a humble home and a poor family. She never approved of the marriage.

Marta's relationship of five years with Carlos had been difficult, since Carlos drank and flirted with other girls. During the months previous to the marriage she had gained weight and was accused of being pregnant out of wedlock.

Carlos emigration was voluntary; there was no persecution or harassment. Carlos decided to go prompted by his brothers abroad and the fear of being recruited into the army. He reported, "almost ninety-five percent of the men my age were fighting the war" and many friends had died. Economic strains were also strong factors for departing. "There were no job opportunities in my country", he



declared. "I would always be poor, but I had a better chance [by emigrating] of surviving because without a job I would starve". He did not intend to depart until marrying. Everyone in the family and friends urged him to leave.

After Carlos departure, Marta suffered harassment by guerrilla members who knew Carlos had worked for the government. This was one important factor for her emigration. Six months later she joined Carlos, even urged by her own mother. After arriving in the U.S., Carlos borrowed the money to pay for Marta's travel.

Both the act of departure and the period of waiting were more stressful for Carlos than for Marta. At least, she remained with his parents, whom she came to love. Carlos described his leaving as "the most terrible thing in my whole life.... It was a feeling so.... there are no words to describe it. I felt very bad.... I was frightened to go away.... Who knows if that farewell I waved at my parents and my little sisters was the last one. That I will not see them again". He felt sad and deceived by life: "It is the saddest thing for a human being to be separated from his loved ones".

Marta felt very bad on seeing him leave. To handle her fears, she prayed: "I prayed the Lord to protect them. Thank God they arrived safely". In front of her in-laws she contained herself, because they cheered her and she "didn't want to become a problem". There were sleepless nights, though. When it was her turn to leave, she felt very happy that she would join her husband, but "it was very, very hard to leave my in-laws and my family".



The researcher believes that Carlos and Marta handled their separation by controlling the meaning of the situation as a mechanism for coping with the separation. They convinced themselves that it was better for him to leave, that it was for their own good, that they would find a better life outside El Salvador, and that they would survive. Carlos and Marta tried to think logically and objectively and to offer a rational explanation to their suffering.

After arrival in the United States, both Carlos and Sara felt the separation from their relatives. Carlos longed for Marta constantly: "After six months in the United States, I was desperate; I still had no means to send for my wife". Sara required about two months to overcome homesickness. She lost weight, hardly ate, and cried for going back home. Marta also mentioned that upon her arrival, she would sit on the steps of the house and cry. "I sat down and wept, and I wept, and wept. I felt that I wanted to talk with my family and it came to my mind and the tears ran".

Carlos and Marta used prayer as an important coping mechanism. He would ask God for strength. She would pray for the sadness to be taken away from her. By the time of the first interview, all still longed for their families although Marta's arrival in the U.S. was a positive event for Carlos and Sara. The three seemed to support each other in order to ameliorate separation from relatives in El Salvador.

Once Marta overcame her initial nostalgia for her family, she developed a positive attitude toward the U.S. She already had gained weight a month-and-a-half after arrival. However, she often felt

sick, which she ascribed to nervous tension from the journey, but was helped by a physician "to overcome her nerves". Her complaints were probably due to her still undetected pregnancy.

Difficulty in communicating with family in El Salvador was of prime importance as a source of stress. Until the second interview, mail service had been normal and was the usual means of keeping in contact. Letters arrived once a month. The telephone had been employed on several occasions, but was expensive. If they wanted to communicate with Carlos' family, an appointment for day and time had to be relayed by telegram; and then his mother had to travel to town for the call.

Mail and telephone then became irregular. Part of the second interview was spent in a futile attempt to place a call. Subsequently, anxiety was expressed at the sense of loss of family and country; the departure in which material possessions and traditions were left behind; separation from needy families with expensive living costs in El Salvador; and Carlos underemployed. Also, Marta's relatives had not written even once since her arrival, with no explanation for their silence. "I suffer much from this", she said.

The couple's goals were to reach Carlos' family in Canada, find a job for Carlos, and send for those still in El Salvador. These plans did not include the wife's family: "She won't be able to send for her [mother] because she has many other children", stated Carlos. To cope with the feelings of separation, they relied in faith that God would bring them together. As Carlos said: "We will go on pleading with

the Lord with all our hearts to allow them to come.... All I've got is my faith in God. I prayed to Him to bring my wife and He did and so I hope to receive His help to bring the rest of the family".

Changes in roles. Carlos and Marta's relationship changed in regard to their previous marital roles. The major change occurred after they arrived in the United States and became members of a religious congregation. The deeper religiosity experienced by both, helped them change some past attitudes which had been harmful to their relationship. Marta had learned more control of her "strong sentimentality" and depressions. She attributed this to a stronger faith in God leading to more patience and to a feel of ease with the strains of their marriage: "What I do when I feel sort of slightly angry, is to pray the Lord to take, take away the demon, because I don't want that, that I may feel gladness; then, I am not angry anymore", were her words.

Carlos became more home-oriented, a definite change from his past behavior. Marta believed this change was an answer to her prayers: "Those were things of God already. What has occurred, we owe it to Him", she said. The researcher also wishes to note that, in the United States, Carlos and Marta had been continually together, on their own, away from relatives and friends, and more dependent on each other. Except for work, Carlos had less opportunity to be gone from home.

In El Salvador, Marta had felt satisfied with her nursing studies. She regretted having to quit and not earn a diploma. During the second interview she still could not plan on continuing her studies, mainly because of her poor English and the transitory state of the family. She had become a full time housewife and seemed to accept the role, in her words, "without complaint". Though she admitted feeling bored when left alone in the house.

Carlos was satisfied with the roles of wage-earner and head of the family. He provided financial support for both women, and also disciplined Sara's behavior. In addition, he was in charge of the application for resettlement. The delays and the difficulty in understanding explanations by the sponsors made him express: "You should see how difficult! I do not have any more patience. All I want is to be there [in Canada] with my family". Thus, becoming refugees had signified changes in roles for Carlos and Marta. For the most part, the changes were favorable with their relationship becoming more stable and solid.

Underemployment/Unemployment. This segment of the questionnaire was designed mainly to compare previous working conditions in the home country with the ones encountered in the host country. Carlos' young age meant that he had little work experience for comparison. As previously stated, he finished high school with training in business administration. Later, he also took a course in communications. However, he had been unable to find a job. The limited military training he received cannot be considered a true job experience.

The exact length of time he had been working in the U.S. was not determined, but it could not have been over six months even if he had started immediately upon arrival. He had to work without the usual benefits of Social Security, medical insurance, unemployment insurance, and union membership. His sponsors had located the job; thus Carlos had no choice in its selection. He became a construction worker. He felt well-treated. The boss trusted him enough to leave him in charge on some occasions. He earned enough to cover living expenses and Marta's medical fees. While working, Carlos suffered a minor accident and a serious case of tonsillitis. He had to pay for medical care since his legal status deprived him of medical insurance or free public health care. Carlos complained about this because in El Salvador medical attention for the indigent is free, including prescriptions.

However, Carlos was not pretentious in terms of financial expectations. His idea of financial security did not necessarily mean earning a large amount of money.

Discrimination. The questionnaire focused on possible discrimination felt after arrival in the U.S. However, the couple indicated that the only serious discrimination, including physical suffering, occurred en route.

Carlos and Sara left El Salvador by bus in January, 1984. Although Carlos offered no details, seven other people, all strangers to Carlos and Sara, travelled on the same bus. The long and tedious



journey was apparently uneventful, until arrival in Tapachula on the Mexican border. Here, the bus company employees refused to carry the passengers because of their nationality. However, they did reach the Tapachula airport where Mexican immigration officials took away their money ("in a shameless way" said Carlos) and insulted them, refusing to accept them as tourists because of the little money they carried. Finally, they were allowed in and arrived in Mexico City where Carlos and Sara remained for days. "I suffered a lot", he said. "We sometimes cried; tears fell from our eyes, [but I] felt trust in God. I would tell Him, 'God, I cannot stand this any longer, what must I do?'" Through addresses they carried, help was found. Religious brethren sheltered and then helped them reach the Texas border.

Marta's journey was easier. She flew directly to Mexico City from San Salvador and then to Reinos, on the Texas border. The experience was still difficult, however. In Mexico City she was left stranded by a lady companion. It took her twenty days to reach Carlos in the U.S. From 140 pounds when married, she weighed 70 on arrival at his side.

Carlos and Sara entered the United States through the Texas border. There, Carlos was arrested until religious sponsors paid bond for his release. It is not clear where Sara stayed during that time, but she was not arrested due to her young age. Carlos and Sara stayed for some time there. From the time of his release, both were treated "very well". They were accepted and received support. None of them could talk of discrimination against them. The sponsors helped them



financially, housed, clothed and fed them. At first, the sponsors also provided medical attention. When Sara complained of headaches and difficulty in reading, a nun took her to the eye-specialist and bought the prescribed glasses. In addition, they were helped with the legal steps to obtain residency in Canada, Sara was placed in school and a job was procured for Carlos. In addition to the religious sponsors, there were two other key sources of support: Brother M. and the family who was sheltering them at the time of the interviews. Referring to Brother M., Carlos said: "He has been very good to me. When I arrived, I had no clothing. He took me to a store to buy some new clothing and plenty of food.... I am very grateful to him and to God". He felt equally grateful to the family. He said: "This family we are staying with is very good, they understand us. They believe that we are all humans, equals.... They will leave deep remembrance in us".

Even though Marta also felt positive about the U.S.A., she felt sick, which she blamed upon the nervous tension of the journey. When first interviewed (i.e., a month-and-a-half after arrival) she already weighed 104 pounds and had been helped by a physician to overcome her nerves. She still did not feel well, which was probably due to the still undetected pregnancy.

Since he had a more active life, Carlos could report evidence of discrimination from other people. He did not experience discrimination himself, but saw discrimination against "latinos". He did not give details.

Knowledge of the English language. The questionnaire used a direct and quantitative approach to assess the couple's degree of mastery of English, but it could not be followed closely in actual practice.

The couple had limited knowledge of the language. Marta declared she did not understand, and "not much to speak" it. Carlos could only read and write some words. He admitted to being worried about this when departing from El Salvador, but this did not have much influence on his decision to emigrate.

During the first interview, Carlos explained that he could already hold a simple conversation in English, but Marta could not, although she understood some terms. Two months later, by the second interview, she had improved in English communication by having practiced with the landlady, who in turn made use of the opportunity to learn Spanish. Also, along with Sara, she was attending evening classes.

Marta's language limitation was not as stressful as for Carlos. However, she once experienced a misunderstanding which, though of minor importance, upset her, and emphasized for her the relative importance of knowing the language. When friends were informed of her pregnancy, she felt annoyed. They would say, "You are pregnant!" She felt that pregnant, which is the equivalent of "preñada" in Spanish, is a term for animals, not humans.

Carlos, being in contact with the outside world, experienced more stress in respect to language limitation. He was particularly upset by his failure to understand the sponsors' explanations for the lack of progress in the effort to obtain resettlement. He felt frustrated by even the difficulty in explaining the symptoms of the throat infection to the physician.

Sara had been admitted to high school through the sponsorship of an American family, but she dropped out after only two months, because she could not keep up with the classes which were "all in English".

Cultural differences. From the moment of arrival in a foster country, immigrants become exposed to cultural differences. The reactions of immigrants to these cultural differences may range from rejection to acceptance. In order to evaluate the subjects' reactions, they were asked to express their feelings about life in the United States.

One of the first experiences Carlos had with the differences in culture occurred during his initial months, when he was living at Brother M's. Members of the church repeatedly told Carlos to save the money he earned. He tried to explain that his family needed money to buy food and clothing, but people would not understand, he said.

Another difference was the importance Carlos placed on the need for a car. Church sponsors had provided a car for another refugee, but not for Carlos. He believed that they did not understand his need for one. He was instead told that he had no need for it, that they would take him anywhere he wanted. "They do not understand that we

want to be a part of the American society.... A car is not a luxury, it is a necessity", he insisted.

Also, he had the impression that people in the U.S. believed that the standard of living in El Salvador was like that in the U.S.A. They thought he had left properties in El Salvador. At one time he complained that there were Americans, even "brothers" or members of the same religious congregation, who would not make any effort to understand his situation when he tried to explain. A comment he made showed how he handled this impression: "I understand them because they don't know my country", he would say.

Differences in foods and their preparation prompted the couple to buy their own. The staples in Central America are corn and black beans. Corn is mainly in the form of "tortilla", prepared by boiling shortly to separate the chaff, bleaching, mashing, and then grilling as a thin soft wafer over a hot iron plate. Tortilla is mainly a complement to other food, used in place of bread, and often stuffed with meat or mashed beans. In rural areas it is prepared daily, a tiresome and time consuming task. Besides mashed, beans are also served whole, principally with rice. Spices, some of which are expensive in U.S.A., are usually coriander, annato, oregano, as well as parsley, green peppers, bell peppers, and garlic. The common vegetables are cabbage, cucumbers, squash, chayote (meliton), roots such as cassava (manioc), and taro. Main fruits are mango, banana, zapote, papaya, citrus, carambola, pejobaye, pitahaya. Some of the

above are unknown or hard to find and very expensive in the U.S. (particularly outside of major metropolitan areas).

Marta and Sara both made evident the loss at which they found themselves in their contact with new customs and ideas. Among Latin American societies there has been an ongoing significant transculturation due to the increased contact with the outside world, particularly the U.S. This has been happening intensely for the past two generations, reaching a degree in certain social strata whereby many of the differences in everyday life have become less apparent. In the marginal economic classes, particularly the rural population, most of the traditions have remained unaltered, although television has been making inroads.

Television programs and commercials represent much of what a nation thinks about its society by exposing its problems, goals, and expectations. The subjects under study reacted to this. Shows with sexy girls drew unfavorable comments about ideas on sexual behavior of women in the U.S. Sara was particularly alarmed at the incidence of abortion in the city. She even belonged in a group that had staged a protest and was verbally harassed by onlookers. Yet, the three subjects were well disposed toward the landlords, whom Carlos considered conservative, since they had raised a family under tenets similar to those of Carlos and Marta. Many Americans, said Carlos, lived "sort of too fast".

Carlos, who expressed himself with vehemence, had the feeling that Americans did not understand the predicament of his people, with the long civil war, the fear of starvation, the lack of working



opportunities, the hesitancy of the U.S. government to provide adequate help for their economic and political problems, and the refusal to admit refugees legally, offering them peace and job opportunities and the chance to "learn the way of life".

Uncertainty about the future. The questions about this stressor were meant to determine the state of mind of Carlos and Marta previous to arrival, during their stay in the U.S., and with respect to the future if their residence in the U.S.A. were legalized.

When a refugee is questioned about whether there is any promise in his future, it may be expected that the decision to leave the home country was in the hope that life would improve. Carlos stated that coming to the United States was a wise decision. Without doubt, he was in jeopardy at home. He would probably have been inducted into the fighting forces (even though at no time did he express feelings against the insurgents, being himself pro-government). He would have had to fight his own people, with a significant chance of suffering, along with his family, the consequences of retaliation by the guerrillas. His circumstances as a young man just turned twenty, recently married, with no means of earning a living, were not enviable. Evidently, his situation was a source of deep anxiety for him.

Marta also felt sure of finding a better future in the United States. Her life in El Salvador had been stressful. The "conflicts" with her mother, the chances of violence against her family because of



Carlos' job in the government, and her separation from him, were reason enough to make her want to get away from El Salvador.

Under the circumstances, any uncertainties about the future were to be considered of secondary importance. It was not easy for Carlos and Marta to leave those for whom they cared, but no matter what hardships lay ahead, the future was more promising outside of El Salvador.

At the time of the interviews, Carlos felt safe. Both he and Marta seemed to be enjoying what they referred to as the freedom of the new country. Carlos appeared to be a self-reliant person who did not hesitate to accept a challenge. If given the opportunity to stay in the U.S., he felt confident of adapting well.

However, he was apprehensive about what the future might hold. There were challenges. One was their unresolved residence status; also their limited language facility. These produced uncertainty regarding their opportunity for improvement. To better meet living expenses, Carlos needed a more stable job, but his residence status placed limitations on his choice of work. His language limitations restricted even more the availability of adequate employment. To this must be added that his opportunity for taking lessons was restricted by his long hours of work. Considering that Marta was expecting a baby and Sara was a dependent, Carlos could not think of classes for the time being, more so because of his desire not to further burden his sponsors.

Sara was perhaps the one most affected by homesickness. For her, the trip under Carlos' protection was apparently not as painful as for him. Yet, for two months post-arrival she lost weight and wept constantly, wishing to go back home. With Marta's arrival, with entering school, and making friends her age in spite of the language difficulties, Sara improved physically. Her school failure cannot be considered alarming, in view of her language limitations and the prospect of departing for Canada.

Moving to Canada seemed to be the solution to their problems. During the first interview, they were somewhat uncertain about the prospect of going, while life in the United States was becoming increasingly stressful. Carlos was constantly afraid of being arrested, and medical expenses were many. Even during the first telephone conversations he indicated "feeling desperate" about not being able to proceed to Canada. He would say: "You should see how difficult. I have no more patience. All I want is to be there with my family. You should see". To him, Canada would offer the stability of being with his relatives, the possibility of bringing over those left in El Salvador, plus medical insurance.

The months of waiting were not easy. Carlos saw a Salvadoran family leave for Canada before him. He was very upset, since their applications for residency had been simultaneous. Even though there must have been reasons, he felt frustrated. He would ask the sponsors, but they failed to explain adequately, that is, in a language understandable to Carlos.

The couple seemed to cope with the frustration of waiting by relying on their faith in God. As Carlos stated, the situation was under "God's will and He must be trusted". In November, Carlos, Marta and Sara were informed that they would leave within two weeks.

Fear of arrest. The stress-producing factor of fear of being sent back to El Salvador was always present for Carlos. It affected all his activities and increased his anxiety for obtaining legal refuge in Canada.

This factor of fear of deportation had negligible importance on his decision to emigrate, since he had made all the necessary connections for arriving in the U.S.A. His brothers in Canada had told him of the steps to take. Different people who helped them in El Salvador and along the route to Texas, must have given him the assurance that everything would work out.

Passage into Guatemala was evidently uneventful. El Salvador has consistently been a welcome source of migrant labor for the coffee and sugar-cane harvests with hundreds of thousands crossing the border every year. Probably for the same reason, there was trouble in Mexico, with its chronic excess of hand-labor. Here the fear of deportation started. Carlos had a difficult time at this point, particularly because he lacked money. For a whole week Carlos had only lettuce to eat. Carlos gave no account of Sara's experience at this point, but the interviewer infers that religious brethren sheltered her. They went underground in Texas. Carlos was arrested but was helped by a religious group. During the following weeks they

led a clandestine life. They did not dare to walk around or to live openly.

Once they were away from Texas, where there more chances of encountering a federal agent due to the presence of illegal Mexican laborers, their fears abated. But Carlos still had fears. Although he could not be deported until the deportation hearings, he was afraid of walking openly when he had to go into town, to the post-office, to the local Social Security office to arrange for his registration, to get to the bus once he started working. If he missed the bus he would have to walk a long way and thus expose himself still more. Moreover, the refugee problem was becoming a political issue in the national elections, with complaints arising about foreigners causing job displacement for native Americans and the need to curtail immigration. Although the sponsors were readily available, efficient and helpful. Carlos would say: "We have to go on. I must be patient.... All I have got is my faith in God".

Dependency. The sense of having to depend on somebody, particularly if it is for almost every activity of daily life, may be a source of stress in an individual. This is particularly true for persons who have always relied on themselves, or on the inner family circle. In developed countries with government aid this sense may become feeble, but in developing ones, such as Central America, it remains strong, with the individual or the family having to meet their own needs.

No direct questions were asked to Carlos and Marta about the fact that they were so dependent on their sponsors. From Carlos' statements during the first interview it was evident that some aspects of his dependency produced stress while others did not. For example, although grateful for the support he received from the two households which had offered shelter, Carlos did not like the fact that he was unable to choose a job. Likewise, Marta expressed her wish of having her own place, although the landlady did her best to make her feel at home.

Carlos' complaint of not being able to own a car, to facilitate his mobility to go to work, and not have to walk if he missed the bus and therefore expose himself in the city, was also a sign of his attitude towards dependency.

Even dependence on the matter of food caused strain. "Food here is different.... I need to buy food that we like", Carlos declared. They were having problems adapting to the differences in taste.

An example of how they tried to gain independence by obtaining the food they liked is illustrated by Carlos' narration on the occasion of a donation of food in a public place. Carlos saw the donation was advertised and wanted to participate, but Brother M. told him: "You do not need that; I can provide for you, so leave that food for people who are in more need".

The prospect of resettlement in Canada and legalization of their status was evidently an important source of stress in the aspect of

dependency, particularly with the demands and regulations of bureaucracy. Much patience was needed to cope with the prolonged process, as well as the difficulty in expressing how they felt at seeing friends who had arrived with them, now leave before them.



## Discussion and Implications

The goal of this section is to integrate the information gathered from the subjects with the information presented in the literature review and the stressors assessed. The experience of the refugees is analyzed according to the phases of their migratory experience. Also, the stressors are ranked according to the impact on the respondents. The coping mechanisms used by the subjects are presented in the order of the frequency of their use, as well as the value of each mechanism for dealing with the stresses experienced by the couple.

The implications of the study are presented in a flow chart along with a guideline for its potential use by family life educators, sponsors, sheltering families, community members, and other organizations interested in helping refugees cope with the stresses of their experience.

With regard to migratory phase or stage, the refugees' flight from their country may be considered as the intermediate type of emigration movement described by Kunz (1973) in which the pressure to leave their country was anticipated and rapidly becoming acute. At the time of the first interview, when Carlos and Sara had been in the United States for nine months, and Marta for one-and-a-half months, they would have been classified as being in the third stage (i.e., private sponsorship) using Montero's (1979) five patterns of migration. During the second interview, two months later, they were

approaching the fourth stage, that is, secondary migration to ethnic enclaves.

The effect of the stressors was cumulative. It is difficult to establish which stressor had the most profound impact. The effect of each stressor varied with the personality of each subject and the role each played in and outside the family. However, some stressors stood out over others in the frequency with which they were expressed. Carlos' extroverted character permitted a better analysis of this observation. Three stressors were the most evident for him: uncertainty about the future, fear of deportation, and underemployment/unemployment. These were followed by separation from relatives and changes in roles. The remaining three, discrimination, knowledge of the language, and cultural differences, became evident only occasionally in the interviews.

Marta was dependent on her husband. He was her outlet for most of her contact with the outside world. This dependency started in El Salvador, before their marriage, and increased after her arrival in the U.S. For this reason, the sources of stress, and her reaction to them, did not parallel those of her husband. Separation from relatives, cultural differences, and dependency were the most prominent stressors for her.

With Carlos' departure from El Salvador, the stress became more acute for her: she lost weight, had trouble with schoolwork, did not sleep well, had fainting spells. After joining Carlos in the United

States, the separation from him was no longer a source of stress; instead, a strong longing for her family then developed.

Cultural differences affected her more notably, probably because of her greater dependency on the sponsors. Her persistent ailments, such as fainting, sensation of choking, and skin rashes, could have been a consequence of her ordeal of the past year, but she was already recovering. She had Carlos to rely upon and to share the strain.

It was evident that a proper environment and religious beliefs were the two mechanisms of coping with stress most frequently employed by both Carlos and Marta. Preservation of cultural traditions and nostalgia were also evident but their usefulness in coping with the changes was not as effective.

Regarding the existence of a proper environment for the refugees, there is no doubt that the sponsorship system to help refugees in the U.S.A. is highly organized, in spite of the limitations imposed by the legal system. The refugees could count on a favorable environment in which to initiate adaptation. Once in the United States, they did not suffer from discrimination. They were well-received, sheltered more than adequately, perhaps with comforts they had never experienced. The community was prepared to help them with educational facilities, working opportunities, and medical services.

Religious faith was the single, most common coping mechanism, and probably the most efficient in ameliorating stress. This helpful coping mechanism could be best observed in Carlos. In El Salvador he

had had some religious feelings. He was critical of Catholic priests. In his opinion, they were too politically involved. The help provided by the sponsors, first during his ordeal in Mexico and afterwards following his arrival in the United States, were probably decisive in awakening his faith, once he was safe in Texas. His fervor increased as time dragged on and he could not have Marta at his side, and afterwards as the process of moving to Canada also became protracted. Even though she insisted that he had not influenced her, there was evidence that, by his example, Marta became devout after arrival in the United States. The letter written by Carlos two weeks after they reached their destination in Canada (Appendix F), a year after he and Sara started their migration, gave evidence of continued fervour.

Contrary to what the literature reports (Lin et al., 1982; Rottman & Meredith, 1982) Carlos suffered additional stress because he had difficulties in helping his relatives left behind by sending them money and goods. This was compounded with the escalation of the war, the disruption of communication, and the scarcity of food in El Salvador.

Preparation of native dishes may be considered an important means of preserving cultural tradition and, thus, of helping to relieve stress. Carlos insisted on looking for foodstuffs that were to his taste and the landlady would encourage Marta to fix meals the way Marta did in her own country. Playing recorded music with religious themes, and instruments and rhythms resembling traditional ones, was likewise a source of relief.

With regard to the stressors, the interviews revealed two new factors as producers of stress on the refugees: difficulties in communication with El Salvador and lack of transportation, mainly a car. The irregularities of mail service to and from El Salvador caused expressions of anguish. Marta showed much of this anguish but it was evident in Carlos and Sara as well. The lack of an automobile was mainly a stressor for Carlos who needed to move around the city more often than Marta and Sara. It was a recurring theme in each of the encounters with him and each time he expressed frustration, even anger. The sponsors had provided a car for other people in his own situation but not to Carlos. He left the U.S. without ever using one.

### Implications

Page 66 displays a flow chart of the implications of this study. It offers ideas intended to help refugees adapt more easily to their new life circumstances. The chart is written as suggestions for individuals and organizations who may extend help to refugees. An example of such individuals and organizations would be professionals doing family life education, social workers and psychologists, sheltering families and sponsors. Community members and organizations can also be very helpful. Individual volunteers are an example of community members that can share their skills and friendship with the refugees. Community organizations and/or institutions such as civic



groups, Big Brothers/Big Sisters, university faculty and students, Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts can be excellent resources to help the refugees adapt to the new environment.

The basis for developing this chart are the nine stressors assessed in this study. The chart is divided in six columns from left to right. The first column consists of the nine stress areas assessed: separation from relatives, changes in family roles, underemployment/unemployment, discrimination, knowledge of the English language, cultural differences, uncertainty about the future, fear of arrest and deportation, and dependency. The second column describes the possible negative emotional reactions of refugees to the stress areas. For instance, looking at the first stressor, separation from relatives, refugees may manifest stress by showing or experiencing emotions such as grief and anxiety.

The third column suggests types of interventions useful to help refugees handle each stress area. The three types of intervention are: primary intervention (or prevention) which aims at preventing the development of experienced stress; secondary intervention (or amelioration) which aims at arresting experienced stress; and, tertiary intervention (or management) which aims at helping refugees to manage or to adjust to experienced stress.

The fourth column shows general objectives. Its purpose is to suggest some specific interventive goals, depending on the type of intervention used. For example, under separation from relatives, the



goal would be to help refugees manage the fact that they cannot be close to their family.

In the fifth column, a series of activities are suggested to reach the general objectives. In relation to separation from relatives, activities such as planning meetings with other refugees from the same country, and the creation of a scrapbook in which to keep pictures, objects, and experiences are suggested.

The last column suggests some human resources that can be helpful to carry on the activities for each stress area. Family life educators, mental health professionals, sponsors, and sheltering families can help the refugees manage the separation from relatives.

Depending on the stress area, more than one type of intervention may be suggested, as in the case of the third stressor, underemployment/unemployment. To overcome such emotions as loss of self-esteem and anxiety, prevention and amelioration are suggested as types of intervention. The goals of intervention would be to prevent refugees from losing self-esteem, to improve their self-esteem and try to control anxiety, and to help refugees avoid idleness. Some activities to reach these goals are to develop a tape on keeping self-esteem, and to suggest refugees to share a personal skill with other people, such as children. Family life educators, mental health professionals, and community members or organizations such as Big Brothers/Big Sisters, university students, Boy and Girl Scouts can be helpful in order to prevent or improve loss of self-esteem, and to keep the refugee from feeling bored or useless.

Although the implications in this chart are addressed to help refugees to adapt to the new environment, it is important to attend the human resources listed in the last column of this chart.

The persons involved in helping the refugees to adapt to the new environment also need support and information. The people used as human resources should be well aware of the different aspects of the refugees' experience. For example, there is need for greater awareness of the cultural and historical backgrounds of immigrants so that there may be an appropriate perspective on their experience as refugees. Arriving at conclusions about the refugees' emotions, behaviors, attitudes, and needs without understanding their background, runs the risk of making wrong interpretations or falling into prejudices which can be detrimental to the relationship between refugees and individuals or organizations offering help.

Also, these human resources may need as much support as the refugees in order to handle the experience of helping them. Many refugees have never had another network of support besides their own family. Refugees come with their own problems, personality characteristics, and ways of interpreting different experiences. They may not readily share their concerns, difficulties, insecurities, and emotions with "strangers". People helping refugees may have to deal with this lack of trust, with rejection, with misinterpretations. It can be useful for people helping refugees to have regular meetings to

share these experiences. The main purpose of these meetings would be to share any feelings of frustration and of anger, to obtain and share information, to look for solutions, or to accept the fact that there are no solutions to some situations. They can hear the experience of others who are also offering help and how they have handled similar experiences.

The creation of a newsletter to share the experience of different organizations who sponsor refugees, is another way of offering support and sharing information with different human resources.

Any person interested in getting involved with helping refugees will be faced with many challenges. The literature on this topic mentions the need for more research on the best way of helping refugees to adapt to their new life. Ideas for prevention programs implemented by different social agencies are needed. It is hoped that the present study has contributed to this goal.

Table 1

## Interventive Suggestions for Treatment of Refugee Stress

STRESS AREAS	POSSIBLE NEGATIVE EMOTIONAL REACTIONS	TYPES OF INTERVENTION	GENERAL OBJECTIVES	ACTIVITIES	HUMAN RESOURCES
Separation from relatives	Grief, anxiety ("Is my family alive/dead?")	Management	To help refugees manage the fact that they cannot be close to their family.	Plan meetings with other refugees for social interaction, to share experiences, and information. Create a scrapbook with pictures of places, people.	Family Life Educators Mental Health Profess. Sheltering family Sponsors
Changes in family roles	Confusion ("Which is my place in my family?"), Anxiety ("Will I lose/gain more power/responsibility in my family?"), Loss of control	Prevention Amelioration Management	To prevent refugees from losing control over future changes in family roles. To arrest feelings of being out of control. To bring family to homeostasis.	Group work to share expectation of family life. Develop a tape about other refugees on how they have managed role changes in their families.	Family Life Educators Mental Health Profess.
Underemployment/unemployment	Loss of self-esteem ("I can't be a provider"; "I can't produce"; "Am I useful?"), Anxiety ("Where will I get the money to pay for medicines?")	Prevention Amelioration	To prevent refugees from losing self-esteem. To improve self-esteem and try to control anxiety. Help refugees avoid idleness.	Develop tapes to help refugees regain self-esteem. Suggest refugees to share their skills and knowledge with others. Group work to share concerns and expectations.	Community members (university students, Big Brothers/Big Sisters, individual volunteers)
Discrimination	Fear of rejection ("I am not accepted/welcome in this country"); Fear of losing work opportunities ("Will people close me doors to new jobs?")	Prevention Amelioration Management	To help refugees understand feelings of rejection from the community. To teach work ethics. To help refugees gain trust in others.	Role playing session simulating management of discrimination. Develop a tape on how the community feels toward the refugees.	Community members (university faculty/students, individual volunteers)
Knowledge of the English language	Fear, shame (with subsequent feelings of loneliness or even isolation: "I feel very bad when I say things wrong".)	Amelioration	To offer intensive English classes and practice.	Motivate sheltering family to practice the language with refugees. Play table games that teach vocabulary.	Teachers Sheltering family Community members (Big Brothers/Big Sisters, university students)
Cultural differences	Confusion ("How come Americans think this way?"), Rejection ("How can Americans think this way?"), Alienation (Separation from own feelings)	Prevention Amelioration	To avoid cultural differences from leading to confusion and rejection. To help refugees accept the differences in values and life-styles.	Plan a lecture for refugees and native Americans to talk about "A typical week in my town."	Family Life Educators Sheltering family Community members (university faculty/students, civic groups, Boy/Girl Sc.
Uncertainty about the future	Anxiety ("What will happen to us?"; "Will I find a job?"; "Where am I going?")	Management	To help refugees adapt to the fact that, at the moment, most of their future is out of control.	Suggest refugees to write each week one or two goals to meet on a short term basis and see how they meet those goals.	Family Life Educators Mental Health Profess.
Fear of arrest or deportation	Isolation, anxiety ("If I get caught, what will happen to me and my family?")	Management	To help refugees manage themselves outside the protection of the haven.	Develop an information bulletin in Spanish suggesting ways to handle the fear of being arrested through practical attitudes and behaviors.	Sponsors
Dependency	Loss of self-esteem ("I don't 'own' anything"; "Am I worthless?"), Loss of control over lives ("All important decisions are made by somebody else".)	Prevention Amelioration Management	To prevent self-esteem from deteriorating. To help refugees gain a sense of control and accept their stage of migration.	Group work together with the sheltering family to share feelings. Discuss ways in which refugees can help around the house (gardening, painting, sewing)	Family Life Educators Sheltering family Sponsors

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## Appendix A

## Questionnaire

### Stressor 1 - Separation from Relatives

1. Mention your relatives in El Salvador:

spouse	grandmother(s)
father	uncles and aunts
mother	sister(s) and brother(s)-in-law
brothers and sisters	cousins
grandfather(s)	nieces and nephews

2. Mention those living in your household.

3. Did you have friends very close to you? Could you talk about them?

#### Past

4. Briefly describe the reasons you had for leaving El Salvador. What made you decide to do it?

5. When you decided to leave your country, how did your relatives or close friends feel or react about it? Probe: Did they agree or disagree? Did they help in reaching a decision? Did they try to convince you to stay?

#### Present

6. How often do you have news from your relatives in El Salvador: Never; once every few months; monthly; more than once a month?

7. What means of communication are employed: Mail; third party; other?

8. How often do your relatives come to your mind?

9. What goes through your mind when thinking about your relatives? Do you feel troubled?

10. Are your relatives in need of help? Are you helping them?

### Future

11. Do you have plans to help your relatives in the future? If "yes", what plans do you have?
12. Do you expect to be reunited in the near future? If "yes", in what manner do you expect to do it?

### Stressor 2 - Changes in Family Roles

#### Present

1. Since you have been in the United States, have there been any role changes such as that of spouse, wage earner, decision maker, head of the family?
2. If "yes", what role changes have affected you? In what way?
3. What is your attitude towards these changes? Were they necessary or not? Do you think they have been good, or not?
4. Do you think there will be additional changes?

### Stressor 3 - Underemployment/unemployment

#### Past

1. During the six months prior to departure, what type of job did you have? What was the nature of the job?
2. What is a good job for you: one that you enjoy doing; one where you earn enough to feed your family, buy the necessary things, maintain the household, buy extra things? Probe: What else could you say about what you consider a good job?
3. According to what you have just said, would you say you were unsatisfied, somewhat satisfied, or very satisfied with your job in El Salvador? If "unsatisfied" or "somewhat satisfied", what aspects of work were you least satisfied with, and which produced satisfaction?
4. When you were in El Salvador, what type of job did you have in mind when you arrived in the United States?

### Present

5. Are you working at present? If "yes", what type of job do you have? Are you working: once in a while; part-time; full-time? If you work part-time, do you hold more than one job?
6. Comparing your present job with the one you had in El Salvador, are you doing better, worse, or about the same financially?
7. Do you feel unsatisfied, somewhat satisfied, or very satisfied with your present work? If "unsatisfied" or "somewhat satisfied", what is it you do not like and what is it that you like about your job?

### Future

8. (If the person has a job): Do you plan to continue in your present job? Do you have any plans to find another type of job or an additional one?
9. Are you concerned about having a job in the future?

## Stressor 4 - Discrimination

### Present (The first days in the U.S.)

1. When you arrived in the United States, how were you treated by those with whom you came in contact? Can you mention instances in which you were treated well?
2. How did this make you feel? What did you do at that moment?
3. Were there instances when you were not treated well?
4. How did this make you feel? What did you do at that moment?

### (Several weeks after arrival)

5. Have you experienced discrimination while working in the United States? If "yes", describe an incident.
7. How did you feel? What did you do?



8. Can you tell of other instances when you have felt mistreated because of your status as a Central American refugee? How did this affect you? (Probe).

### Stressor 5 - Knowledge of the English Language

#### Past

1. How much English did you know before you came to the United States?

- a) Were you able to understand a person who talked to you in English: not at all; some; much? (Probe).
- b) Were you able to write it: not at all; some; much? (Probe).
- c) Were you able to read it: not at all; some; much? (Probe).
- d) Were you able to speak it: not at all; some; much? (Probe).

2. Once you decided you were coming to the United States, were you concerned about

- a) reading the language: much; some; little; none? (Probe).
- b) speaking the language: much; some; little; none? (Probe).
- c) writing the language: much; some; little; none? (Probe).
- d) understanding the language: much; some; little; none? (Probe).

#### Present

3. Are you able to understand spoken English better now than you did before? If "yes", explain in detail.

- a) What about writing, can you do it better now?
- b) Can you read better?
- c) Can you speak better?

4. If not able yet, how much does it bother you not to understand: little; some; much?

- a) How much does it bother not to write it better: little; some; much?
- b) How much does it bother not to speak it better: little; some; much?
- c) How much does it bother not to read it better: little, some; much?

5. Are there moments when you wish you knew English better? If "yes", give details.

6. What are you doing to improve your understanding, reading, writing, and speaking of English? Give details. If not, why not?

### Stressor 6 - Cultural Differences

You may have noticed that there are differences between you and the people of this country. I am talking about differences, for instance, in ideas about marriage. (Probe).

1. Could you state any differences between the way you think and the way Americans think in relation to such a topic? What are your ideas? How do you feel about these differences? (Probe).

2. Any other differences you would like to comment upon? (Probe; suggest topics if necessary).

### Stressor 7 - Uncertainty about the Future

#### Past

1. When you were in your country and thought about the future, did you see any promise of something better for you and your family, of things staying the same, or of things getting worse? In what way(s)?

2. What did you hope to achieve upon coming to the United States?

#### Present

According to your experience as a refugee, there seem to be two things that might help you feel better about the future: one is to find a permanent job, and the other is to legalize your status in the United States.

3. Do you have any plans to obtain the legal status? Will you give details?

### Stressor 8 - Fear of Deportation

#### Past

You know that the government of the United States controls immigration

1. Before you left El Salvador, how much of a concern was it for you that you might not be allowed to stay in this country: none; some; much?
2. If "some" or "much", did this concern make your decision to come to the United States more difficult, or not?
3. Did you personally know anyone who was deported?

#### Present

4. Now that you have been in the United States for some time, how much concern do you have that you might have to leave this country: much; some; little?
5. How have you been dealing with this concern?

### Stressor 9 - Dependency

#### Dependency

1. How do you feel about having to depend on this family (the one giving shelter) and on the benevolence of many other people?
2. Do you feel uncomfortable?
3. If you feel uncomfortable, how do you cope with your dependency?

## Appendix B

## First Interview : September 1984

### Observations before the interview

Marta came to the door to greet the interviewer by hugging her. She introduced herself. Once inside the house, Sara, the sister-in-law, was introduced to the researcher. Marta introduced her by saying, "This is my husband's sister". Sara was less effusive, glanced sideways, smiled only slightly and, in a low tone, said: "Hello".

The interviewer asked if Carlos was working that day and she was informed that he was not. Carlos and the landlord had gone out but would return shortly. Within a few minutes Carlos and the landlord arrived.

Carlos was expressive and animated, asking if his sister had already been introduced. Since the manner in which Marta had introduced her was informal and did not create trust, Carlos introduced her formally. Sara then became warmer and more friendly.

During lunch, Carlos dominated the conversation. The landlords participated less conspicuously. Marta and Sara took part only occasionally.

After lunch we moved to the living room. The landlords departed to attend to other duties. The couple sat on the sofa. The interviewer sat in an armchair placed diagonally in front of the sofa. Sara reclined on a large cushion on the floor. The interviewer

made clear that the wife's cooperation was expected. Then, the interviewer addressed Sara, inviting her to participate also. She answered in a very low voice, shrugged and twisted her lips. "Well, alright", she said. A few minutes later she fell asleep, not waking up until near the end of the interview.

Carlos dominated the interview. Marta participated occasionally. She sometimes yawned, reclining back and closing her eyes. At one point she leafed through a book, but when addressed she always answered readily. Although she appeared distracted, she gave signs of following the conversation. Her answers were always accompanied by a smile.

#### Explanation of symbols and terms

R = Researcher

C = Carlos, the husband

M = Marta, the wife

S = Sara, the sister-in-law

Brother M. sheltered Carlos upon arrival in Kansas City

"Brother", in quotation marks, refers to individuals who belong to the same religious congregation. They are also commonly called brothers in Christ or Christian brothers. Here they are also referred to as "Christians" (in quotation marks).

Brother (without quotation marks) will refer to male siblings.

(Unintelligible) stands for those words and phrases that could not be understood because recording was not clear.



- R: (Addressing Carlos) How many of your relatives live in El Salvador?
- C: Part of my family is in Canada.
- R: How many are in Canada?
- C: Two of my brothers are in Canada and many relatives, cousins, an aunt. That is the family I have in Canada.
- R: But your parents, where are they?
- C: My parents are still in El Salvador. My mother, my brothers, two sisters. The younger ones.
- R: Before going on, would you be willing to continue cooperating with me?
- C: Yes, yes. On off hours, you know, on Saturdays.
- R: (Addressing Marta) I would like you to share as he is sharing with me. I am interested in both of you as a couple.

(Addressing Sara) I wonder if you would like to cooperate or if you would rather only listen to what they have to say. If you prefer to listen, there is no problem. I don't want you to feel uneasy.

S: (Unintelligible)

NOTE FROM THE RESEARCHER: She said something like it was fine with her to cooperate in the interview, but actually she didn't.

- R: Of course, much of the information will be the same for Carlos and you.
- C: Yes, of course.
- R: (Addressing Marta) Later, with questions such as how do you feel regarding separation from your family, your answers may not be the same as your husband's. If you want to comment, it will be of great help.

(Addressing Carlos) Your parents are in El Salvador.

- C: Yes, a lot of relatives. For example, my grandmother (maternal) and about four brothers of my mother. Many relatives remain in El

Salvador. They live in (name of the town withheld). My family is very poor, they are all farmers. Some relatives work, employed by the government; those are the ones that live away. Some others were studying.

R: (Addressing Marta) In your case, which relatives are still there?

M: My siblings, my mother, and the rest of the family.

R: Do you have any relatives in the United States or in Canada?

M: No, no.

R: Is your father alive?

M: No, no, he died.

R: Did he die a natural death or was he killed in the war?

M: No, no, he was killed.

R: He was killed?

C: (Unintelligible)

R: A long time ago?

M: Four years ago.

R: Was the problem four years ago very bad in El Salvador?

C: Yes, it was very serious.

R: And why was he killed? Was he a civilian? Was he a soldier or was he killed unjustly?

M: Oh, no. You see, he was part of a company of (unintelligible).

C: Yes, but he was a civilian. He helped in the Armed Forces, but that help was obligatory.

NOTE FROM THE RESEARCHER: Details about the death of her father were not pursued. Marta appeared uncomfortable.

R: (Addressing Carlos) How many brothers do you have, how many members in your family?

C: We were four brothers, but the oldest was killed in a car crash. He was a National Police sergeant, he was killed in a car accident in El Salvador two years ago.

R: So there were four brothers.

C: We were four brothers; today, only three.

R: And sisters?

C: There are three females. She is one (pointing to Sara) and two younger sisters that have remained in El Salvador with our parents.

R: So the three males have left El Salvador.

C: Yes, they are in Canada.

R: (Addressing Sara) Are you the eldest female?

S: (Unintelligible)

NOTE FROM THE RESEARCHER: She is indeed the eldest of the girls.

R: (Addressing Marta) And you, how many members in your family?

M: We are seven in all.

R: Are you one of the youngest?

M: About the sixth; no, about the fourth.

C: She is the fourth.

R: How old are you?

M: I'm 20. (She is really not yet 20).

R: Which relatives lived under the same roof? Were there only brothers and sisters and your parents or were there other relatives living with you?

M: At home, only my brothers and sisters.

R: (Addressing Carlos) And at your house?

C: At my home, only my brothers and sisters.

R: And regarding your friends, did you have close friends?

C: Yes, we had friends in the capital city, we had a lot of friends.

R: (Addressing Marta) In your case, friends you felt very close to?

M: Girlfriends.

R: Did it hurt to leave them back, to leave your friends?

M: Yes, because they were good friends.

NOTE FROM THE RESEARCHER: Up to this point, the atmosphere during the interview was still strained. Questions were asked and answers given without the researcher gaining much insight.

R: (Addressing Carlos) Why don't you tell me, I suppose you have told the same story many times before, but how did you get here?

C: I would like to start at the time I started to study, that would be good. My parents are very poor; people are very poor in my country. My father built houses, they are called "masones". My mother worked as maid in a house. Then my father - he was very old, he was about 60 years old - had got tired of working. My mother started to work because she was 20 years his junior.

R: Was your mother 20 years younger than your father?

C: Yes. He was 60, she was 40.

My mother started working and with what she earned in a store she owned in the market place she provided for our studies. Four of us graduated from ninth grade. I was the son who took more studies; I graduated from high school. She paid me one year of locution, that is, studies in communication. (Unintelligible) ... and my brothers started to work.

NOTE FROM THE RESEARCHER: The husband tried to explain that while he continued studying, the other brothers started to work. Remember he is the youngest of the males.

C: Ten years ago the oldest brother became a member of a security corps, that is, he became national traffic policeman. He started to work and helped to support us: meals, medicines, and studies for the youngest.

Another brother, the one before last, started to work too. He stayed two years in a police headquarters when he was recruited by the Armed Forces. He became part of a military group, the National Police. Then my third brother, he was very young, he was only 17, started as a member of the National Guard of El Salvador. He started work there too. We looked for the security corps because there were no other sources of work. You had to have friends, good relations, to get work in a factory and they were not able; they had no other choice than to become members of the Armed Forces. And with their low salaries they helped support their families.



When my oldest brother had been eight years as a policeman in El Salvador, he was killed in a car accident. When we realized we had lost him and the situation in our country grew more difficult, my brothers started to think of leaving El Salvador. The second one, the oldest now, was the first one to come to Canada. He came to the United States first and then he asked for asylum in Canada. With his help and the manner he told us to get to Canada, another of my brothers left with his wife and then it was our turn and of a lot of relatives who settled in Canada as Salvadoran refugees.

It has been a very sad journey for us as refugees in a country so different from ours. For example, we have arrived in places where we have been received with joy, with friendship and sincerity; but we have also arrived in places where we were not welcome with joy. On the contrary, we were told nasty things. For example, when we arrived in Mexico City we ran into many difficulties with the government authorities. When I was travelling with my sister we were stripped from all our money by the government authorities, specially by immigration officials. Even though we carried all the required papers, the tourist visa, they asked us where we were coming from. And when they learned that we were Salvadorans, we were debased. We suffered a lot in that country but we had faith in God. We carried little money and suffered a lot because of the cold weather during our journey. We sometimes cried; tears fell from our eyes.

R: Was that journey made on foot?

C: No, part of it was made by bus. In Tapachula, in the frontier with Guatemala, that happened this past January 20, the bus company's employees stood on our way; they did not want us to board our buses. I don't know why.

R: They did that to the two of you only?

C: No, we were seven. They knew that we were Salvadorans. I don't know why; they knew that we carried visas and passports. We had no other choice than to look for another way to get to Mexico City. We reached the Tapachula airport and bought our tickets. We had almost run out of money. Immigration officials carried a search and asked for our nationality. When we told them we were from El Salvador, they took all Salvadorans to a room, questioned us and required our money in a shameless way, without any shame whatsoever. We gave them all our money. At the same time they debased us. This was done by the authorities of Mexico, a world renowned country. They behaved in a very inhuman way.

R: How did they debase you?

C: They told us that we were illegals, that we should go back, that we were not tourists because we carried too little money. Things like that. But we went on, we took the plane and went on. We

arrived in Mexico City and asked help from some churches. That happened last January during the cold weather and they allowed us to stay overnight while we searched for a way to go on to the United States. We also appealed to some churches in Texas, then we got in touch with an attorney who helped us apply for political asylum in the United States and Canada.

R: By that time, were you already married to her?

C: At 19. I was in the Armed Forces. I had entered military school. While attending, I started to feel that I did not belong there because I am a person that loves freedom, that likes to say what he thinks, that likes to speak the truth. I love joyfulness and I don't like people telling me to do insignificant things. I love freedom, I like to feel loved. I felt no love at military school, no peace, so I decided that such a life was not for me. I prayed the Lord to get me out of there. I knew it was difficult, because I had pledged allegiance, my mother had signed for all the necessary papers to get me into the Armed Forces. But the Lord helped me and I was able to leave military school.

R: What did you do to get out? Did you do it the right way or did you desert?

C: I did it the right way. I was lucky. I filled the application papers informing my superiors that I was feeling sick (which was not true) and was not able to keep going. I was not strong enough and had no military inclinations. They granted me an indefinite leave. My commanding officer signed the papers and said, "Whenever I need you, I'll call you". I left the school in 1983. Then I spent seven months at home because I could not study nor were there job opportunities in my country. I helped my parents at the farm. During that time I started thinking of getting married. She and I had been going steady for five years and loved each other very much. We got married and then I told her that I had planned a trip abroad. I didn't know how and where but I was decided to do something. We did not feel at ease in a country at war, always striving for liberty that evaded us. It was a difficult step to take. People used to sing to liberty, to peace and liberty, but we asked ourselves: where is the peace that we don't feel we can ever find?

My brothers sent some money from Canada, \$450, that was loaned to them, because they were studying there, not working. They asked me to take my sister along, but they did not provide for my wife. I would have to work to pay for her trip. That is why my sister came along with me, and we started our trip to the United States.

R: What was it like, your departure from your parents?



C: Oh, it was the most terrible thing in my whole life. I have suffered in my life, during my stay in military school, during illnesses; but leaving my wife and my parents was the most terrible thing.

R: What did you actually feel as you were leaving?

C: It was a feeling so ... there are no words to describe it. I felt very bad, much more since I was leaving my wife of only two months. It was something terrible.

R: Were you afraid to leave them?

C: Yes, I was frightened to go away, but at the same time I felt that I had to go, that my country was at war and the war was being fought by young people my age. Almost ninety-five percent of the people my own age were fighting the war and I would eventually have had to fight too, one way or the other. It was very sad when I had to leave my parents and my wife, but I knew I had to leave El Salvador.

R: Did they accept your leaving?

C: Yes, they were glad because they knew that many young men, thousands of them, were already dead. Many of my own schoolmates had been killed in the war and they thought that sooner or later I could be killed, too.

They were very glad even though they wondered what might happen to us in the journey. They knew I would suffer but had faith in God that in another country I would be able to find a job. I would always be poor, but I had a better chance of surviving because without a job I would starve. They were poor and could not provide for me but had very high spirits, much harmony between them, a great desire to earn their daily bread. My mother is still working in El Salvador, working very hard to support my father and my two other sisters.

R: So, nobody really tried to make you change your mind?

C: Nobody; nobody tried because all young people were trying to leave the country and those who can manage to leave are really lucky, because they will be spared all the suffering. My country is undergoing a terrible crisis and my parents are very, very poor. When we finally arrived here members of the church helped us very much. They loaned me money and that is how I was able to bring my wife along.

R: (Addressing Marta) You were a nursing student, weren't you?

M: Yes, I was in my last year.

R: (Addressing Carlos) Was it at college level?

C: High school level.

R: You can learn a trade in El Salvador while in high school, isn't it?

C: That is true. I studied accounting and business administration there.

R: When did you get married then?

M: I was still in high school.

C: That is true.

R: (Addressing Marta) Did you work in a job?

M: No.

R: How did you feel when he said he was leaving?

M: I felt very bad.

R: What did you feel?

M: I didn't want him to go away from me.

R: Did you tell him that?

M: No, I couldn't because his parents tried to cheer me up and then I thought carefully and didn't want to become a problem.

R: Were there moments of anxiety, of fear?

M: Aha!

R: At times I suppose you were hardly able to sleep.

M: There were nights I was not able to sleep at all thinking about them, about their journey, but I prayed the Lord to protect them. Thanks God they arrived safely.

R: And how was your journey? How did you travel?

C: His letter finally arrived telling me to join him. I told his parents that he was sending for me. I was sad to quit my studies, but longed for him. I told myself, I like my studies and regret leaving my family, my parents-in-law, whom I had grown to love so much.

It was very hard for me, but they said that it was good for me, that he was of military age and it was dangerous for him. We would have many problems if I did not go.

C: (Unintelligible)

M: I felt happy I was going to meet my husband, but it was very, very hard to leave my parents-in-law and my family.

R: How did your mother react? What did she say when you told her you were to leave?

M: She felt very bad; she was very sad but she knew I was right. I had to leave the country.

R: How did you get here, how did you get out of El Salvador? Did you travel by bus?

M: No, the trip from El Salvador to Mexico was by plane.

R: Did you have all your papers?

M: Yes, I had my passport with me and a tourist visa for Mexico.

R: When did you get to Mexico?

M: I arrived at night. A friend of ours, a member of the church, was waiting for us and took us to his house to spend the night. Next morning he helped us with our papers in order to fly to Reynosa.

R: Where is Reynosa?

C: It is at the border, between Texas and Mexico. Reynosa is a Mexican state right at the border with Texas.

Our Christian brothers took us into Texas and charged us nothing. We help each other. We are Protestants, members of the church Assembly of God. We help each other free. They did it as a service.

R: So neither of you had any problems at the United States border?

C & M: No.

(Addressing Carlos) Who received you at the United States?

C: Members of the church. We had addresses with us. We all came into the United States and thank God and His church. During our journey many churches helped us. Who else would do it? And they did it with joy and we are very grateful for their help.

NOTE FROM THE RESEARCHER: The following conversation dealt with a Guatemalan family whom the researcher had previously met in Concordia, Kansas and how they were helped by a church.

- R: (Unintelligible) ... they crossed the border on foot. They didn't know what they would be up to, and were met by the famous "coyotes" who offered to help them. Have you heard about the "coyotes"?

NOTE FROM THE RESEARCHER: "Coyotes" are people at the border who charge immigrants for getting them into the country. Sometimes they charge high sums for the job, sometimes they may beat and rob the migrants.

- R: They stripped them of their money and took them elsewhere. It was then that some members of their church learned of what was happening. They did not have the contacts you had.
- C: That is true.
- R: They had no contacts and were at the mercy of whoever showed up. Instead, you did have people that helped.
- C: Yes, fellow members of the church. They never did anything illegal, against the law, to help us. They did the human thing to do, the Christian thing to do.
- R: It was then of much importance to you that you were members of this religious group. You received a lot of help from them.
- C: It was entirely important. God had a plan for us, for his children. He loves us, he has a plan for us. I don't want to sanctify myself but everything I have asked Him for, He has granted me. When I wanted to be someplace else, He put obstacles in my way, He knows why, but when I understood His reasons, I thanked him. When I ask Him for a job, He provides one for me. I've got great faith in Him. Everything that has happened I owe it to His mercy. There were times during the journey that we couldn't stand the cold weather; we suffered a lot because of the cold. And I would tell Him, "God, I cannot stand this any longer, what should I do?" A short time later we found ourselves in a house where we were being provided with hot food and shelter. After six months in the United States, I was desperate, I still had no means to send for my wife. A lawyer in Texas who had helped me with the legal papers told me that it would take no less than three years to bring my wife, that I had to learn the language and find a job first. When I heard that, tears dropped from my eyes. I cried a lot and thought of going back home. I asked God for strength. He said that I had to go on, no matter what, that all things for Him were possible and easy, even though they looked so difficult to me. I saw Him in my dreams and asked



Him, "Why can't I have my wife with me. Nobody helps me, I have no job, no money, no clothes, what should I do?" He answered me, "Be patient. I have shown you the way and your wife will be with you soon". I had an incredible, marvelous feeling. Two months later my wife was here and I was happy. I had some money when I went to meet her to take her to a physician because she was sick.

R: (Addressing Marta) Are you sick?

C: Yes.

R: Is it due to this situation; is it from nervous tension?

M: Yes.

C: Yes, nervous problems.

R: Are they due to the journey, or did you suffer from them before?

M: They are due to the journey.

NOTE FROM THE RESEARCHER: The topic of her sickness could not be immediately probed. Apparently, they did not intend to offer more information.

C: She got sick then. But God is so good to us! This family we are staying with is very good; they understand us.

There are Americans, people of this country, who don't understand us. This is a great problem. There are people who offer their help, but when we try to explain our problems, they do not take our place. But this family is very good; they do understand.

It was very good when I lived with Brother M. I am very grateful to him. He helped us a lot; we lived in his house for 3 months. He understood everything; he really understood my feelings and didn't (unintelligible) me. There are some "brothers" to whom I tried to explain and they didn't understand. They would not take my place. But there are people who do understand.

R: When you say that they do not understand you, what you really mean is that they do not know what you are talking about or is it that they mistreat you?

C: No, I'll show you. For example, we are now receiving help from members of the Baptist church. They tell me that upon getting a job and earning some money, I should save it. I tell them: "Look, I need to buy some clothing, I only brought two suits from my country; I carried no baggage, only a small bag. I need to buy a good suitcase, some clothing, a coat for the winter; I need medicines, food because food here is different. I need to buy food that we like. I have to spend my money. But they do not

understand, they insist that I save. They don't see that we have our own special needs.

Once I told one of my "brothers" that I had to learn to drive. He said that I had no need to drive because they had a car and would take me anywhere. They don't understand that we want to be part of the American society. We want to learn the language, which we are already studying. A car is not a luxury, it is a necessity just the same as buying a pair of shoes. You cannot go by foot here; this is a very big city. It is not like my country, where cities are rather small and you can go anywhere by foot or by bus. They do not understand these things. We are very thankful to them for understanding us.

R: But how have the Americans treated you? Have you had any bad experiences?

C: I have had very good experiences. They have treated us very well but some of them do not understand us. They think that we have money and properties back in our country. But our home is very humble. We went to school, my brothers and I, and we received our high school diploma and the basic cultural knowledge that a person should have. But we had no comforts. Here we need many things that Americans do have, like a car; it is necessary to learn how to drive. We need winter clothing. They believe that we live the same. I understand them because they don't know my country.

R: (Addressing Marta) How long have you been in the United States? About a month, isn't it?

M: A little over a month.

C: A month and a half.

R: What have you to say about all this? Have all your experiences been positive in the United States?

M: Yes, they have treated us very well.

C: I feel people love me.

R: Mexican immigrants, not refugees, but people who are looking for jobs, sometimes receive unfair treatment from their bosses. They receive very low wages, much below the minimum. People are prejudiced against them, and they are discriminated upon. I thought that there could have been times when you were mistreated.

C: (Unintelligible)

R: Have you experienced that?



C: Not openly against us, but we have observed it. The discrimination suffered by latinos here in the United States is something you can perceive at just a glance.

R: Is it towards you or towards others?

C: Yes, towards others. I have spoken with Americans and I have perceived the margination that exists here. I don't know if they are right or not in doing so. But I do know that it exists. Not everybody behaves like that. Our landlords are an example. They believe that we are all equal, that we are all humans, the same. Brother M. and all the others that have helped us are very humanitarian and loving people.

R: Not all the people can say the same. There have been families who have lived through very difficult circumstances. I insist that your religious group has been of great help. The family in Concordia received help from their church. The church has provided them with everything.

C: We had no money left at the Mexican border and there were moments when we suffered deeply. I spent a whole week eating only lettuce, which a friend provided. I suffered a lot.

R: (Addressing Marta) You didn't go through the same, did you?

C: No, she didn't.

M: No, no.

R: And how are you now? Are you beginning to feel better?

M: No.

R: May I know what is the matter, or would you prefer not to talk about it?

C: She doesn't like the climate, she thinks it is too hot. She has to get used to it. I have told her about the winter, and she is afraid she will die with the cold.

M: Yes, I don't like the climate.

C: She has suffered physical changes. She has been feeling sick, with a skin rash on her back. I took her to a physician and she is feeling better now.

NOTE FROM THE RESEARCHER: They later knew that Marta was pregnant but they did not share the news until October, when they were sure of her condition.

R: Have you got any news from your families?

C: We have been communicating with them and they have told us that the situation in our country is the same. They are happy we are well and safe. They know that our lives are being preserved. I have great admiration for this country, because human rights are guaranteed here, because we are all humans. We all enjoy freedom here. That was not true in my country. As foreigners here we do not enjoy all the freedom that Americans do, but we can share their freedom and peace and we feel happy.

R: How often do you get news from your family?

C: About once a month.

R: (Addressing Marta) Is it the same with you?

M: I have only been here a month and have not heard from them yet.

R: Do you use the mail only?

C: Yes, by mail. We have telephoned, but it is too expensive.

R: Do you often think of your family?

C: Very often, constantly.

R: What are your thoughts about?

C: We think that when we get to Canada we will do our best to send for them. All you wish deeply you will achieve and we wish so much to send for them!

R: Are you feeling safe at this moment?

C: We don't think so, but we have to keep going. I don't feel safe and the United States government has denied us their help. They are not willing to help, and my country is undergoing great suffering. It is one of the most tortured countries in the world because of the war and it needs help from countries like this. I cannot understand why the United States is not willing to help when so much help is needed. I know that the United States is offering help to other countries, countries that do not have the needs that my country has. I know people from other countries living in the United States who have peace and job opportunities in their land, but prefer to be here and live comfortably. I often ask myself why don't they help my country where people are suffering so much. They are starving to death and need of work. I can't understand.

R: Do you fear for your family back in El Salvador?

C: Yes, I am afraid that something may happen to them. They live in a very dangerous zone where frequent battles occur between the Armed Forces and the guerrillas.

R: When you think about your family, do you think about the future and having them with you?

C: Oh, sure, that I may bring them over. I sometimes see it as something impossible because we don't receive the necessary help. But we will keep on pleading with the Lord with all our hearts to allow them to come. Our parents, who helped us so much since our childhood, and we had to leave them so abruptly! Maybe we won't see them again, because I do not want to go back to El Salvador. Maybe if there is an end to the war ... but the war goes on with no end in sight. Who knows if the farewell I waved at my parents and my little sisters was the last one, that I will not see them again! But I try to think of the future and of getting together because it is all very sad. It is the saddest thing for a human being to be separated from his loved ones. During the six months I remained separated from my wife all was bitterness and sorrow. It is all so sad!

R: Did you feel angry?

C: No, I have not felt anger, rather sad and deceived by life. I told myself, "Why has this been my fate, why have I suffered so much having to leave my wife, my family and knowing that it is impossible for me to see them the next day?". All I've got is my faith in God. I asked Him to bring my wife to me and He did, and so I hope to receive His help in bringing the rest of the family over.

We hope to receive help from people here. We hope that the people in Canada will give us the opportunity to be a part of their society because we cannot go on living without learning their way of life. Because we have our own (unintelligible) and we will be (unintelligible). We want to learn, we are learning the American life, specially their language.

R: Did you speak English before coming to the United States?

M: Not much.

R: Were you able to read and write it, at least some words?

C: Yes.

R: Did you understand spoken English?

M: No.

R: Were not you worried that on coming to the United States you did not know the language?

C: Yes, it worried us but we had in mind studying. I've very little opportunity for it because I'm always working. I often take night shifts and I come home very tired because my work is mainly physical. But both of them are going to classes. My sister is attending high school and understands a little English. She has been here only 3 months but she has much more time to study. And she is doing very well. She goes out with American girlfriends that speak only English and they talk a lot. I imagine they understand each other.

R: Can't you do that yet?

C: Yes, I can. I can hold simple conversation, not a very long one but I can make myself understood.

R: Much better now than before?

C: Yes, much better.

R: (Addressing Marta) What about you?

M: No, I cannot speak anything yet.

C: No, she can't. She can only say:

"Hello, how are you?"

"Good morning."

"I'm hungry."

R: (Addressing Marta) But I see that you communicate with the landlady, and little by little, words will be coming out. Do you think you have learned some since you arrived six weeks ago?

M: Yes.

R: You do understand a little more. Are you working?

M: No. I'm not.

R: (Addressing Carlos) Are you helping your parents?

C: I have not been able to yet, and they need it because food back there is very expensive. I have known that my father was very



sick. When my wife left El Salvador he was in the hospital. He suffered an accident while at the farm, he needs money, but I cannot send any right now.

R: Can't you send money to El Salvador?

C: No, I would love to send them some money, but my situation is too tight here, having to provide for my sister also.

R: Is it not because you fear it may get lost in the mail?

C: No, no it's not that. There was a mail strike in my country. And for two months I wrote home and they would not receive my letters.

R: So it is that you cannot help them.

C: Yes, because I haven't got any money. I do not earn enough, even though they are in great need.

R: Are you waiting, then, for Canada, to help?

C: Oh yes, sure, that is what I want.

R: (Addressing Marta) Will you send for your mother and your sisters?

M: Yes, for my sisters.

C: She wants to help her mother who is a widow. She has nobody to support her. She had the help of a married son who earned very little. My wife wants to help her. Perhaps she won't be able to send for her because she has many other children, but she would like to send some help.

R: So, six siblings remain in El Salvador?

M: Yes.

R: The eldest is married.

M: The eldest, yes.

C: He has a mate, he is not actually married. He has a common-law wife.

R: (Addressing both) How long were you separated?

C: Six months.

M: (Unintelligible)



R: (Addressing Marta) Did you stay all that time with your in-laws?  
M: Yes.  
C: Yes, she was studying.  
M: I travelled everyday from my in laws' to school.  
R: (Addressing both) Were those months very hard?  
C: The most terrible time of my life.  
M: I tried to forget with my studies. That was my only comfort.  
C: Nothing made me forget.  
R: Did you try to keep it away from your mind?  
M: Yes, I tried to concentrate on my classes and then I went back home to do the homework..  
R: (Addressing Carlos) Were those days so despairing for you?  
C: The entire six months.  
M: I kept receiving mail from him saying how he missed me.  
R: (Addressing Marta) It seems as if you were stronger than him.  
M: Yes, because the studies helped.  
C: My sister ...  
R: Don't wake her up, please.  
C: She went crying for three days. That was when she was staying with the Cuevas family.  
R: While you stayed with Brother M., did she stay elsewhere?  
C: Yes, and when I phoned her I always found her crying despairingly. The Cuevas family spoke English only. But she started to get along little by little.  
R: When did she start to feel better?  
C: In about two months. She lost a lot of weight and kept telling me that she wanted to go back home. I told her, "What, to go back?"

That's impossible!" I brought her cassettes with Christian music and books, but she kept telling me that she could not read, that she was having trouble with her eyes. I told her that I had no money for an eye examination. What could I do? She was suffering constant headaches. Then a lady friend, she was a nun, took her to the doctor and she actually was having eye problems. Eyeglasses were prescribed but they were too expensive. The nun bought them for her.

R: That was good from her!

C: Now she is feeling better because my wife is here. They were classmates from early childhood and both studied nursing.

R: So both are the same age?

C: No, my sister is younger, she is only 17 or 18. My wife is 19 going on 20.

R: So now you give each other company.

C: Yes, but sometimes they quarrel (laughing). One tells the other that this or that doesn't look good on her or doesn't fit her and the other will answer that she is not asking for her opinion.

R: Your life of a month and a half ago was really different from today's.

C: Yes. I was heavier when staying with Brother M. I weighed 145 pounds.

R: But you don't look lean.

C: What?

R: Really, you are not so lean. It is true that I have just met you and cannot tell how you were, but you don't look it.

C: Yes, but I was much heavier.

M: Yes, he was.

R: You must have been heavy; you told me you lost a lot of weight.

C: I was 145, but now I am 110 or 115, a difference of about 30 pounds.

R: You were rather big, then.

M: When I left El Salvador I weighed 110 and got down to 99 pounds.

R: You lost 11 pounds.

M: That is not much.

C: In twenty days!

M: I could not swallow food.

R: Was it nervous?

C: Yes, she was sick.

R: And why did the journey take so long?

C: She suffered a great deal because she was left stranded in Mexico.

R: What really happened?

C: There is a "brother" who was then helped as I am. We agreed that both our wives would travel together. But I did not realize that his wife did not want to.

R: Why?

C: I don't know, I can't explain it. She left my wife stranded in Mexico and she had to go on alone.

R: Where was she left alone?

C: In Mexico City.

R: How was that; did she get up in the morning to see her gone?

C: No, they were at the airport and the other lady bought a different plane ticket. She took an earlier flight and when my wife went for her ticket the flight was sold out. My wife told her that she should not leave her like that, to wait for her, but she did not. That was a big problem, but God has a plan for each one of us.

R: (Addressing Marta) What did you do when you saw you were alone?

M: A friend that came with us on the trip tried to comfort me saying that he would help me get the necessary papers to buy my ticket to reach Reinosá.

C: He was with his wife.

R: Were you crying?

M: No.

C: No, she was not crying, but he was able to see her difficult situation.

M: I was very nervous. All I wanted was to return to El Salvador. I didn't want to go on. But these people were on their way to Reinosá and they said: "Dear, what's the matter?" I said: "Nothing". They saw that I was very worried, that I looked so young and asked why was I making the trip alone. I told them that I was with a friend, that we were making the trip together, that we had the same destination and were supposed to meet our husbands, but she had left me alone. They said: "What a pity! You cannot consider her as a friend, we feel sorry for you".

C: We were very shocked and I have learned that this girl was not a real Christian.

R: How sad!

C: That is true, and that is why I don't believe in words anymore. I have to see actions. Because I didn't know. I was glad my wife was coming with a "Christian" friend that would protect her if necessary, a person bearing our Lord's prayers. Everything happened to the contrary. But anyway, she is with us now.

R: (Addressing Carlos) When you were separated, what worried you most, that she would not be able to come or that she might not be safe?

C: I was looking for a chance to send for her, trying to find a way to be together because I knew she was very unhappy, because she couldn't see me and I felt the same. I wanted her at my side. That was what I wanted the most and what I constantly prayed for. You see, everything turned out as I wanted.

R: I imagine you don't expect to become separated in the future.

C: Yes, that is what we expect.

R: Are you planning to go on to Canada?

C: We hope so.

R: (Addressing Carlos) Your faith is what has given you the necessary strength, isn't it?  
(Addressing Marta) And you, is it the same with you?

C: If it had not been for my great faith in God I would have gone back to El Salvador, I wouldn't have got here. It has been very hard, being so far from my family, from my wife. I felt so lonely I would have returned. I don't know what I would have done. But I had great faith. God told me to have faith and patience, I did it and everything came out well.

R: (Addressing Marta) Have you the same faith, are you as fervorous?

M: (Pointing to Carlos) Yes, even if he were not present.

R: Did you pray constantly?

C: In my first letter from the United States the first thing I told her was that she had to have great faith in God and pray to Him. Because if you don't pray to Him, you will never be able to see Him. But if we all have faith, we will all be able to see Him. You have to be on his side always. My wife told me that she has more faith now.

A Salvadoran coming to the United States, having left his wife back, usually takes 4 to 5 years to earn enough money and to process the necessary papers to bring her along. I did all that in 6 months. It was God's miracle. You can take the "brother" I was talking about as an example. He spent a whole year striving to get some help. I never asked for help to bring my wife. They told me, "Do you want to send for your wife?" I said, "Thank the Lord, sure I want to send for her". I never asked for help. I only said that I was married and had left my wife back in El Salvador and soon one of my "brothers" told me that he would help bring my wife.

R: You received good support from Brother M., didn't you?

C: Yes, I am very grateful to him; he has been very good to me. When I arrived I had no clothing. He took me to a store to buy some new clothing and plenty of food. One time donations of food were advertised, and he told me, "You don't need that, I can provide for you, so leave that food for people who are in more need". He took that food and gave it to some Cubans. I am very grateful to him, and to God.

R: (Addressing Sara) Your brother has told that it was very difficult for you in the beginning to get used to your new life and that you lost a lot of weight. When did you start to feel better, when you moved to this house?

S: Yes, that's true.



C: Yes, she felt much better, but it took her 2 to 3 months. She started school and made friends with some Mexicans that spoke Spanish. The arrival of my wife did her a lot of good, too.

R: (Addressing Carlos) How long have you been in this house?

C: About a month and a half.

M: Since my arrival.

C: (Pointing to Marta) She has gained a lot of weight; she got very thin.

R: Why don't we stop here?

C: OK. It is so hot, even with two fans on.

### Observations

This was the end of the first interview. Carlos and Marta tried to insist that the interviewer stay overnight. At the bus station, Sara was less reserved, said good-bye with a hug and appeared to be glad upon knowing that there would be more interviewing.

## Appendix C

Telephone Conversation: September 28, 1984

The purpose of the call was to learn about the couple and to find out about their attitude toward the first interview.

Carlos immediately said that perhaps they would leave for Canada in less than a year, adding that he felt annoyed because one of his brothers in Christ had already departed for Canada, when their applications had been submitted at the same time. He went on telling how he wished he were in Canada with his relatives. He felt desperate. The persons taking care of the applications did not say why their applications were not processed faster. His relatives already in Canada were of the opinion that he should not have asked for help from the religious group in charge of their case, but the one they had used. In his opinion, communication difficulties due to language limitations between the couple and the religious congregation were the reason for not understanding the delay. He said he had lost patience. However, he tried to understand what had happened to this "brother", and thinks that some of the reasons to explain why this family was sent first, were that: the family was large (five children, husband and wife); they appeared to have had problems with the families lodging them, and had to move from every one they had stayed, all this leading Carlos to believe that the family was too heavy an economic load for the sponsors. On the other hand, he wondered why this "brother" was given a car and not him who needed it so much.

He also said that Marta was three months pregnant and was very happy about it. He also was happy he felt at ease seeing her happy. His faith in God gave him much strength. He repeated many times that all his suffering and his experience as a refugee had been God's will and that He must be trusted.

Carlos feelings about getting to Canada were very often expressed as: "You should see how difficult; I don't have any more patience; all I want is to be there with my family; you should see!"

On the other hand, his sister had dropped out of school. She could not keep up with the classes; they were all in English. She was taking English lessons at an institute, but did not understand anything at all of what was going on. She had been able to enter this school with the help of an American family. When the family learned she had dropped out, they resented it. It seemed that the studies were too difficult for her and the family expected too much.

Finally, he also said that he had had an accident at work, in which he fell and hurt his hand badly. He had to pay for the medical fees.

## Appendix D



Telephone Conversation: October 13, 1984

The first thing Carlos said was that he had been sick from tonsillitis. He had had similar episodes in El Salvador. He had not been able to work for a week, and had received no wages.

He had spoken to his sponsors a few minutes before about Canada and was told that the papers were in process. He expected to receive the form for the medical examination the following week.

Again he repeated his wish to be in Canada, feeling very uneasy with no legal papers. He expressed being afraid, adding that if he had Social Security he would have felt better and not so worried about going to Canada.

He had heard that people were bothered because foreigners were displacing natives in their jobs and he was afraid this was becoming an issue in the presidential elections. He was even afraid to walk to work, particularly because it was far and sometimes he missed the bus. At another moment he said: "I must be patient".

Asked about Marta, he told how happy she was, that she had had some morning sickness, and that he had taken her to the doctor. She felt well now.

Going back to his problem with tonsillitis, it was suggested that they needed to be removed, but he said he lacked hospital insurance. In his country, he said, these services were almost free. On one occasion he had been hospitalized free of charge for two days. Sara, he said, also suffered from tonsillitis.

Upon describing how his throat felt, he said there are sort of "infected nodules" that interfered with swallowing "even water". Nothing goes through my throat". He had lost weight. He then spoke about not being able to explain well to the doctor what he felt, because the doctor knew no Spanish. The doctor prescribed penicillin and fluids. After paying the doctor, he had to go to the drug store and pay for the medicine, something he was not used to in his country because those services were free there. He wanted to go to Canada, to receive the necessary attention and to undergo the operation, if necessary.

## Appendix E

## Second Interview: November 1984

### Observations before the interview

On arriving, the interviewer and a companion were warmly greeted by Marta and Sara. The setting was more relaxed. The landlords were out of town for the weekend so the refugees were in charge of the house. Carlos was at work and would be back by 5:30 p.m. While the interviewer chatted with Marta, Sara did the same with the interviewer's companion.

The first news Marta gave was that at last they were leaving for Canada, expecting to travel in two weeks. Sara brought in a letter that had just been placed in the mail box. It was from El Salvador, from one of Carlos' sisters. The letter said they had not received any news from them. This annoyed Marta and Sara, since they never failed writing home. In the letter the family wondered if they had forgotten them and resented that Marta herself had not taken time to write, after being so close to each other. A friend had been murdered. This affected Marta, who reacted by going upstairs. After a while she returned.

Moving over to the kitchen with her, the researcher pursued the conversation. Sara and companion remained chatting in the living room. The conversation with Marta was not taped, but the researcher wrote a summary from memory some hours later. This summary follows.

While Marta was cooking some "tortillas", she talked about her life in El Salvador.

Corn to make "tortillas" was ground daily, she said, several pounds at a time, a tiresome and time consuming task. Her father had been at a job that required much traveling; thus, he spent a lot of time away. The mother was domineering and would not accept excuses. When there was complaining about excessive work, she would say, "I don't know how you will do it, but you will do it". If disobeyed, the mother would punish, for example, by spreading corn meal on the floor and making Marta kneel on it for up to an hour-and-a-half. If Marta protested, her mother would silence her. Marta described her reaction: "I would choke with tears, but mother would command, 'Shut up, shut up, don't cry!' I felt as if I would burst, but had to control myself. I believe that is why I suffer from my nerves, having to keep repressed and letting it out". On other occasions the mother would beat the children with the buckle end of a wide belt.

Marta was 14 or 15 years old by then and used to tell her mother, "You don't love me, and I do not love you either. As soon as I can I will run away and you will never hear about me ever again". Sometime later Marta commented, "One says such things at the moment, but a mother is a mother and one will always miss her".

She was very critical of her family, saying that they were a proud people, caring too much about appearances. She never liked that. She had a hunch that the death of an uncle of hers had been in vengeance for the family's attitude. Confidentially, she also



expressed that her husband was not liked by her family, since he belonged to a humble family. Marta's family never approved of her marriage.

Several times during the day she said that there were many things in El Salvador to make her unhappy. It was interesting to learn that in her last months in El Salvador she was harassed by members of the guerrillas, called "insurgents" there. She said they did it because they knew her husband had been in the military. They used to ask her: "Where is he; where did he go?" She said that she was not married, but they insisted, "When are you going to meet him?" She then replied, "What are you talking about? I'm not going to see anybody, I'm not going away, I'm going nowhere". She said they harassed her again and again. In other instances they pressured her, "Well, here is a rifle for you to learn how to handle it, let us see when you do it", but she told them, "Leave me alone, I don't want anything to do with you, I don't know what you are talking about".

Carlos arrived by six o'clock, and was shown the letter. The three came back repeatedly to the failure of mail to arrive in El Salvador. A money order for a hundred dollars had gone astray. There had been no phone calls even though the family could call "collect". Letters arrived from El Salvador, but lately not the other way, and thus, the reason for the sister saying they had not written.

### The interview

At the dinner table, Carlos, Marta, and the researcher listened to Salvadoran music, while the companion and Sara watched TV in the living room. Comments centered on the visit of the President of El Salvador to a city in the Midwest. The researcher had heard his speech at Kansas State University and told them about the reaction of the people to it. Carlos expressed his admiration for him, saying he considered him an intelligent man who had done good to El Salvador.

It was left for the couple to start the interview, which as usual, the husband led.

NOTE FROM THE RESEARCHER: Many parts of this interview failed to record on the tape because of the very low tone and the hoarse voice employed by the wife, Marta, when speaking in private. Also, the last half hour of the interview could not be taped. The researcher wrote a summary from memory some hours after the interview, and is included at the end of this Appendix.

C: I must go to the immigration office on the thirteenth; that is what I have been told by a lady.

R: Who is the lady?

C: One that helps me in my "program".

M: (Kidding him) They want to send him back to El Salvador.

C: The lady will be taking me to the immigration office and they are going to extend me a permit to work. With the permit I will at once apply for Social Security.

M: What for? We are leaving!

C: That way, they say, I will have my Social Security and there will be no more problems in my job.

R: So, now they come with that!

C: (Laughing) Just when we are leaving! This letter just arrived from Immigration, telling to report at 8 a.m. the thirteenth, Tuesday.

M: Too late!

R: How was the medical exam? What were the requirements: blood, blood pressure, TB ...?

C: Eyes, chest; they asked about past diseases ...

R: Diabetes, and so forth? (Addressing Marta) Did they do all that on you too?

C: Yes, but everything came out alright.

M: X-rays, but only of the chest.

C: Because you are pregnant (everybody laughs). She gets mad when she is told that.

NOTE FROM THE RESEARCHER: The wife does not like the term since it sounds just like in Spanish, "preñada", which is rather indelicate upon addressing a lady.

M: Everybody, when they saw I was pregnant ("embarazada", in Spanish, which is the actual term she used) told me, "You are pregnant!" I answered yes with half a smile, so that they did not realize I disliked the term.

R: It is so personal!

C: Yes, it has always been sort of that.

R: Are you going to call to El Salvador?

M: No.

C: Get me the number.

M: Right away? I thought that ...

R: It is a good time; it is a good day, cheaper.

(Carlos goes for the phone number.)

M: I think it is six o'clock there. Salvador is very pretty. A friend of mine wants to come here.

R: From there?

M: She has been writing to me. I believe she is coming.

R: Is that so? When?

M: I don't know, but ... She is not married. Said she is coming.

R: Do you know when?

M: No, I don't know. She wants to go to Los Angeles. And then, when she gets there, she wants me to help her. (Unintelligible). She pays her way ... (unintelligible).

(Unintelligible) ... the one who just wrote (referring to the other sister-in-law whose letter had arrived). She is a dear one. You should have seen how happy I felt.

R: What is her age?

M: Some fifteen or sixteen, but she is a woman, very attractive. I like her because she liked me a lot. We got together very well, got along very well. She has resented not hearing from me.

R: It is a pity, isn't it, that letters don't get through. I imagine it makes everybody still more anxious.

M: (Unintelligible)

R: That is true.

M: And with that friend of ours murdered. It happens that he was the one who saw me go and said: "You are going away, aren't you?" and I answered him: "Never to come back". "You are leaving and forgetting us", he said. "No", I answered, "I will come back, I will remember you". Then I remember he hugged me, and that was the last.

R: Your husband says he used to drink a lot and perhaps that was the reason ...

M: That is true. He was a sick person, and suffered his ill health and he had been told not to drink booze, but he insisted in drinking. I used to kid him, "Why do you drink?", I said. "It is bad". Because the widow liked me very much and I always stopped at their place on my way to school. "This is all very sad", she used to tell me.

(Unintelligible)

Because when one is away from one's mother ... perhaps see her, see them.

(Unintelligible) ... and I sat in the stairs and wept and my husband would find me weeping and said, "Why are you weeping, I have not done anything to you!" "It is nothing", I replied, "it is that I am so ..." It is sort of I don't like to tell him what I feel. I am sort of reserved. And he asked, "Why so sad?" and I don't know, I wept and didn't tell him.

R: What, what was it? You wanted to be with your family?

M: Yes, because ...

(Carlos returns.)

C: Kid, don't you have the notebook with the telephone numbers?

M: Oh, that is it!

C: We have a notebook and we have misplaced it.

M: Isn't it in those drawers?

C: No, I looked into them.

M: It happens that you did the mistake of handing it to the landlord ... Yes, this is delicate, see, yesterday I came in (unintelligible) "You will account for this, you have not taken good care of it!"

R: Was he saying that to Sara?

M: To me! He tells me to tell her not to meddle with things. I can't, I'm her in-law and I cannot scold her.

C: Is this the number?

R: Don't you have to dial any other number before this zero?

C: Well, when the call is to be payed there, you dial the zero first. But when you pay for the call you dial number one. It is one, isn't it?

R: Let me see the phone book.

M: When you are calling, you have to pay.

C: Of course!



M: Well, then you have to dial that way.

C: I just want to make an appointment (for the call).

R: An appointment?

C: That is, my mother lives in the country, so I make an appointment for a call tomorrow at a certain hour.

R: And then you phone again tomorrow?

C: With ANTEL, the communications office. We call a lady that lives in the town and a telegram is delivered to her. Then, the lady goes to tell my mother.

R: Then, you have to tell all that to the person answering the call?

C: My brother gave me this number, telling, "Dial 011, all of it, and then you wait a short time until somebody answers. But El Salvador is not shown in the phone book.

R: I have not found it yet. Let us dial and see what comes out, eh? If not, then we look again. Dial it like that, see what happens.

M: Oh, we live so far from the Capital!

R: How is it coming?

C: It sounds as if it is going through.

R: Now, tell me one thing: this number, was it given to you by your brother?

C: Yes. I do not hear anything. But once, I dialed and it was a hit, look at that, in Santa Helena, exact.

R: Was this the number? (The number is dialed).

C: Yes, it is ringing.

R: This people of ANTEL, is it expected that they be there all time?

C: I am not sure.

R: Because it is night time.

C: Yes.

R: Look, rates are very low all day Saturday.

C: Yes, I know.

M: What time is it there now?

R: (Hanging) The call did not get through. The phone rang again and again and there was no answer.

C: Nobody answered, isn't that so?

R: So, you may call any Saturday at any hour; you do not have to wait till evening, you can do it at daytime too.

R: Yes.

C: Yes, look, just as it rang now, that is how it rings (when making previous calls).

R: But, at what hours have you called then?

C: I have done it mornings, afternoons, one, two o'clock. Once I got it, perfect it was, without any problem, and now I don't know what has happened.

R: Maybe communications have been cut.

C: That is what happens, since on occasions the subversives get into town and tear down the phones. At the time of her coming, we tried all we could. There was another Salvadoran with us, and we could not get the call through. They had destroyed some communication towers.

R: Now, tell me: In order to call your mother, you phone this people, they receive the call in the form of a telegram, which will tell your mother that next day ...

C: She comes over to the phone terminal.

R: She shows up at the stated hour.

C: Yes.

R: And this telephone number was given to you by your brother in Canada?

C: And it is the correct one because we have already talked over it.

R: And it is supposed that this is ANTEL's phone.

- C: Yes, ANTEL is the phone company. She (pointing to Marta) used to study at an institute and when calling her I dialed ANTEL's office indicating, "Connect me with "eight" at the National Institute". "OK", they said, and then they got me with the place where she studied.
- M: But I was not there (laughing).
- C: I would not get hold of her, but I spoke with the teachers.
- R: Wait, I have not got through (looking in the phone book).
- C: It happens that they are still open at six. At ten the ANTEL people are gone. They are closing because it is dangerous.
- R: And since when have you called and nobody answers?
- C: Since Sunday.
- R: Sunday nobody answered you.
- C: Nobody. The landlady was helping me in the call. She has called the offices here and she is told, "The phone number is alright, but the problem is over there". They say it sounds busy all the time.
- R: Busy. Now it rings and rings and nobody answers.
- C: Now they are away, too late. We are out of luck.
- R: See, rates are low till five p.m. tomorrow the same as today. Did you know that? From eight tomorrow morning until five p.m. rates are low, so you can keep on calling.
- C: But it is on Saturdays that the appointment can get to her Sunday.
- R: But you could place the call tomorrow for Monday, or can't you?
- C: My mother works on Mondays. In my letters to her I have given my number, and my little sister there tells that they need to know my number, that my letters never get to them. Ugh, my country is ...
- M: Not even mine have arrived.
- C: I give them my number to call collect, so that they do not have to worry.
- M: And in my letters I tell that my husband was sending a hundred dollars, telling them about us, and nothing.  
(Unintelligible).  
(Unintelligible) ... in some five years, perhaps (laughs).

R: It might be worth to call tomorrow.

C: Yes, I shall do it tomorrow; I'm going to call early in the morning.

R: Because it rings! (Meaning that the phone was not busy).

C: Yes, but I know very well that the employees quit at night; they are very afraid.

R: It is true, it is logical.

C: See, the subversives tell them, "Why are you working here?" They are trounced. Sometimes they are pushed against the wall or make them lie face down and so forth. They insult them. That is why the poor fellows don't work at night, only during daytime.

R: So what time is it there, now?

C: I don't know, I believe it is an hour earlier.

M: I believe it is now six-thirty since it is seven-thirty here. We could have called at five, when we came back from the walk.

(Lapse)

C: May a mentally ill person drive here? I saw one.

R: How did you know he was mentally ill?

C: Because I talked with him.

R: What did he tell you?

C: He was giving a speech. He spoke English and Spanish. Also, a gentleman told me he was a mental patient.

R: But, did he have a driving license, or does he drives without it?

C: That I don't know. I sort of thought: "look, and this person driving" ... Because after we talked ... and I already had been told he was mental ... something about an accident. I also saw a disabled person driving.

R: Oh, well, they are permitted.

C: He had trouble moving around, for example, walking. Had to do a lot of motions. I don't know what his disability was. And driving a car! And then I say, it is hard for them because I see that even moving the hands is hard for them, and to brake and accelerating ... all those motions!

- R: It is with buttons and levers, they work by hand.
- C: Because I saw this gentleman coming in his car, and then I saw him get out and started to make some motions, but it was hard for him to open the door and I started pondering, how does he drive?
- M: No, what he employs is only the feet, only the feet and the hand, for acceleration and the driving wheel.
- C: The lady here, see, the landlady, has a defective foot, so she has trouble driving. Today she even sort of bumped the small car and the insurance company has already fixed that.

And my sister told me that she took her to school and she could not stop the car with the foot and crossed the red light so that all the other cars had to stop also. She just saved herself, she says.

- R: Why couldn't she? What is the trouble with her foot, that she cannot brake the car?
- C: It happens that she has difficulty moving the foot. She is ... (unintelligible).
- R: Oh, is it she can't move it fast or something like that?
- C: I believe she cannot move it fast, because several times when we go up to the den she cannot manage her foot well. Why do they go on and drive?
- M: But presently she is going to the doctor and she has to order her shoes. One foot large, then the other shorter.
- C: But what I say is that here the laws are not as strict in that respect, because if they were, that people would not be given permission to drive.
- R: Yes, but perhaps it would not be sort of fair, true?
- C: Yes, the need, true?
- R: Here they try to be as fair as possible.
- C: A friend I knew from Puerto Rico, look at that! I asked him, "Why don't you have a car, being an American citizen?", because the pastor brings him home. And he says, "It happens that I got sick in my head, I had headaches and they don't give me permit to drive". "But you are well now", I tell him. He "thinks" well and all (meaning in his right mind) and that one a paralytic and drives. "It is alright", the Puertorrican says, "they just don't permit me".



R: Maybe it is migraine, which may occur while driving.

C: Yes, he might lose his sight.

R: Exactly, something like that.

M: That is, he may sort of "catch an air" (a common expression in Latin America, meaning getting exposed to air at some moment and in a specific part of the body may be harmful).

C: No, a seizure.

R: That would result in loss of consciousness, maybe, while driving, it is dangerous.

C: I have a relative, a cousin, and he is just talking with you, and he suddenly swoons but real ugly!

R: He falls down?

C: Yes, dead. For fifteen minutes he is dead and he has to be helped and given air that he may not die in those fifteen minutes or half an hour. Very terrible. He dies fast, his heart stops. The doctors have done all possible with him.

R: From what does he suffer?

C: I don't know.

R: I have never heard about that.

C: Haven't you read the book "Maria" (a romantic 19th century novel by Jorge Isaacs, Colombian), what that girl gets? I don't know how it is called.

R: Yes, it is called epilepsy.

C: Epilepsy ... He just gets seized. Sometimes he gets that, see; but there are times it is not so bad. See, this cousin is real good-looking; she knows him, blue eyes, real good-looking.

M: And he is blond, pure American.

C: But, see, that bothers him a lot.

R: Is he married?

C: No!

R: How old is he?

M: He is about twenty-six.

R: Poor him.

M: But he keeps real young, and very good-looking. I liked him (she laughs). Because he had very blue eyes, his little head ...

C: No, but see, he "does his needs on himself" (meaning he urinates and defecates) and when he gets up, how ashamed he feels! So he is always very sad.

M: But he goes around very clean and does not show it.

C: No, well, but look, once I don't know, he says he was eating and there was sort of a ledge and I don't know how, but he fell and broke this bone, ugh, real ugly.

R: Whose relative is he?

C: My father's. How awful that disease! You have never seen a person who ...?

R: Thanks God, no. Once it is true I saw a girl, but as I was told she had a psychological problem, and such a thing can happen for psychological reasons, not for physical ones, do you understand?

C: She (pointing to Marta) when she arrived here, she fell down twice.

R: Did you?

M: No! (laughing)

R: He is kidding you.

M: No, it is true. See, when I am angry, I get very angry and the anger becomes repressed in me, and there are moments when I feel like grasping and hitting him. (Carlos laughs). Yes, look, and if the other (referring to Sara) are against anything I say, I feel like hitting both of them. Then I can't yell at them. (Carlos keeps laughing). And what I do is choke, choke; it is then clear that I must swoon, isn't it?

R: And what happens, you fall?

M: The doctor just said in my last visit that I suffer from my nerves, and not to get in too many problems because, "You", he says, "are going to suffer from the heart. You start, but if you keep on, worse may happen to you".

C: She had it twice.

R: And what do you get?

M: I get very angry.

C: She tells me, "It hurts, my heart hurts. Pour some alcohol on me". I rub her with alcohol and in a short while she goes out, she cannot stand her heart; it becomes paralyzed. But it was only twice in my country and then here.

M: Then I told the doctor and he told me to be careful, that my nerves were very bad and that he saw in me a propensity to anger.

C: But she got two heart tests and everything is well. When she gets sentimental and all that is when she gets it (with a smile).

M: But it is natural, it is like that, the doctor told me that ...

(Lapse).

C: When she had been here fifteen days, she had one, and about fifteen days after I had left El Salvador.

R: Is it when you store up a lot of emotion?

M: Aha!

C: That is it. That is, when she knew that I was leaving, she had that thing, and when she came over, the joy of being with me.

M: He says it is joyfulness ... the anger I had with him!

C: Angry, she says! I was not angry!

M: I don't know how I got it but the truth is that finally the doctor told me: "You have that now, but if it goes on, it may damage your heart". Who knows. And the doctor asked me what was the matter and then I told him. He told me, "If you think something affects you, go ahead tell me".

R: Your trip through Mexico was also very tense ...

M: Ah, that too.

NOTE FROM THE RESEARCHER: The topic of conversation changed to religious matters.

R: Did you go to church in El Salvador?

C: I was Protestant when leaving. Before that I had been Catholic and also (unintelligible) ... because in the first place, it is not that I was induced to go to this church (unintelligible) ... because God knows we had need of the Lord. We let our mind run: "This Bible here, the Lord's, let us read" and we started to read it at home. We read in the Old Testament where it deals with "idols" and such things, that images are abomination for God and the Catholic Church has images. Oh well, we said, it is not a good church because it says so here, ten times in the Old Testament. So we started to become aware, we started to pray the Lord to tell us what church to go to.

R: That was, when you say we, at home?

C: Yes, at home. For example, I used to go to a doctrine there, gnostic, Christian. I saw that it was negative also, because they said that Jesus Christ was merely an intelligent man. That I did not like. The Catholic one neither, so many images, full of images all those I went to. Then we kept on reading and reading the Bible. Thus we came here and went to a church which has no preaching. One does not pray to an image. I first went to this church in Texas, it said: "Here you will observe God in spirit and in truths". In spirit and in truths (reflecting). And when I read, "you have to worship the Father in spirit and truths", "ah, then, here is the place, this here", I said. It is not that religion saves, because I don't think that it is the church, which is Assembly of God, that will save me, it is one's work, what one understands about the Lord's word. Therefore, go to this church, but ...

R: (Addressing Marta) When in El Salvador, did you go to church?

M: I will be very frank to you, I didn't go to any. But an aunt of mine was "Christian" of this religion and she used to take me. I listened to what was said, but did not understand and believed what they said; I never was negative. He (pointing to Carlos) used to say, "I don't know how you ..." when we were dating. "I have faith in Him", I answered, "and what am I going to do at the church?" So I didn't go. If the family went to Mass, I did not because I was with company, and he (pointing to Carlos) told me I



didn't believe. And I said, "You don't know. I believe in Him, but you don't know". When my aunt took me to church, she used to explain, but when I entered this one here nobody told me anything, neither him, nor my sister-in-law. I entered because I wanted to.

C: The majority of people in my country is Protestant; plenty are coming into Protestant Christianity.

M: It is good, see, to decide for oneself. If he tells on me sometime, I can say that I did it because something touched at my heart.

R: Not because you were following him but that it came out of you ...

M: Yes, because I was following God. I, why should I be following him? (pointing to Carlos). And if I did not believe, well, who was going to make me believe? It would be a problem if we were to live like that "brother" he told about who is already a "Christian" (referring to a friend, regenerated alcoholic)). But if it happened to us. Like the Mexican friend who before becoming a "Christian" laughed at his wife's beliefs. If I didn't come to accept what he believes in, I would rather divorce, because what for if I don't like it? If he went Sunday, would I stay upset here because he goes to his church and me locked here, isn't it true? And thanks the Lord that He was who made us follow Him.

C: I didn't talk her into accepting.

M: No, nothing.

C: I only told her when she arrived, "I go to church; if you want to come". "Let's go", she said, and then she said she wanted to become baptized and she did.

M: But he did not lead me, and I never have told him nor will ever, that it was him; it was something I felt, even though I was not a "Christian" in Salvador nor went to any church. They used to say that I did not know; maybe it was that I didn't understand ... A sister of theirs talked all the time about "Christianity". She tried to talk me in and I didn't say no. And I said to her, "I sure like it, I do". "I see you want to", she said, "but I don't know why you follow him (Carlos). That will come out naturally".

C: One of the mistakes made by the Catholic Church in my country, and it was what led to the death of Monsignor Romero, was politics.



Because I don't know if you have been told. At times we heard him over the radio at Mass. Fifteen minutes, more or less, he spoke about the Lord, about God's message and then he changed to politics, and only politics and politics. That is why my country ... (the statement remained unfinished). For example, the "padre", the priest at my hometown, was the same. "That the papers today so and so", imagine, so many news. They do not preach the word of the Lord, but only politics. And this gentleman, who is very interested in the problems there ...

R: Who is he?

C: The gentleman who lives here (the landlord) asked me why they had killed Monsignor Romero, and I said: "I don't know; it is known that it was the Armed Forces", and, "Why did they do it?", he asks me, "Well, I heard say", I told him, since I had many friends and it was heard said, "Well, he was assassinated because he talked only of politics". "This Monsignor", I tell you, "in the Cathedral where he was, there were certain subversives that the army captured who were hiding in the Cathedral, and logically, he had them there, in the Cathedral. And then at Mass he only talked of politics. Then I must say that was mistaken, we should preach the word of the Lord, to make everybody pray so that the Lord help us. But no, see here!, imagine that he being a Monsignor, talking of politics and politics, he didn't talk of God, only of politics, so he was assassinated, I tell you. And truly, my brother tells me, the one who died, he was a sargeant. I used to say to my brother, "Tell me about it". He said, "It was the army". "Was it the National Police?" "No", he tells me, "the Intelligence Center of the Army, not the Security Corps. They killed him because we went there to arrest this man (meaning the Monsignor) and subversives there in the Cathedral shot from the Cathedral, and I don't know what other things, but there was this disorder in the Cathedral and hidden bombs".

R: Was that in San Salvador?

C: Yes, in San Salvador, in the capital. So this man (the Monsignor) helped a lot. He communicated with the subversives in San Vicente, a department, and helped them much. "He was killed", he says, "because ...

(Lapse).

C: So that is what happened to the man.

- M: And the "padre" in Santa Elena, with the war there, there were soldiers at the park, fifteen truckloads but really full of them. He was saying Mass, a Sunday, and talking of politics and the soldiers in the park were hearing him and did nothing.
- C: That is the problem, the priests talk politics, and one is afraid to talk, knowing that I'll be ill-treated. Because in the Department of San Vicente, the majority of the priests was killed. All the contras. But also there were priests in the Armed Forces. There were even colonels, because my brother tells me that they had a colonel in the Department of San Miguel, and he was a priest. And for example, at the military school where I was studying we had a priest that loved us much and we attended Mass on Sundays. Only for us, the priest. And then I say: how can that be so? (laughing)
- M: And it was God's Mass they celebrated.
- C: But that priest had been years at the school and the message was very pretty. I remember, when we attended Mass we had no weapons, nothing, no beret.

NOTE FROM THE RESEARCHER: The conversation shifts. The husband now gets up and goes to the living room, where Sara and the companion had stayed. The wife and the researcher talk until the end of the interview.

- R: (Addressing Marta) Are you sleepy?

Tell me one thing, aren't you worried of being pregnant and having that heart problem? Has the doctor told you anything?

- M: No, he said, "Do you have problems, anything you feel?" "Well, yes", I said, "I want you to give me your opinion". "Look", he says, "you suffer from the nerves, but also only (unintelligible) you may have problems". It is that I am afraid, I tell him, because several people tell me that I'm one of those they call "attack prone". "No", he says, "those like that carry it in their heart, but you merely suffer from the nerves. But if you dare do something that makes you too angry, what it will do is damage your heart. You have to take care of yourself and see how ... but do not do that because that is a bad disease, that is not good". It is that when I had problems with him (referring to Carlos), I lived upset all the time. I am always resentful, because of my family. What I tell you, me weeping and they, "Shut up, shut up, shut up", and one felt like choking.
- R: And you could not ...

- M: No, because my family (unintelligible). "Shut up, shut up, you are bothersome, shut up" and so on and one wanted to let out, but because they themselves use (unintelligible).
- R: And what happened with your husband; how was he connected with this; why did you resent him?
- M: Well, because sometimes he has gone out and returned late. And I say to him, "And why do you do this, coming at this hour?" "I went to the country", he says. "You know you have been with me only for a short time, you don't have to do that because I insist you don't". When one is recently arrived one feels real lonely, feels very sad. And I sort of wanted to tell him to leave me, that I wanted to go! I felt that and at the same time anger remained in me. When he arrived the landlady told me: "Serve him his dinner". I did not want to, I felt angry having to. I felt angry, I had something like a feeling and resentment. All day I felt angry and then when (unintelligible). Late at night I still was feeling the same.
- R: You experienced that here, isn't it?
- M: It was here that it happened. I don't remember what it was, but he told me something that I did not like and he went on teasing me. I did not like it because I am real sensitive. He and his sister take sides against what I say. If I don't like something and notice that they do, I keep out. Then they go on telling and telling. What I do is lower my head, because I feel choking and at the same time I can't, I can't. Then this stays inside, sort of a resentment and that is what I tell you, I can't let go.
- R: Stays inside you.
- M: Yes, and then when I can't hold any more I tell them, "Look, I don't like that!" But the doctor told me, "You have that because you let it start, but if you can prevent getting angry, it will not happen".
- R: And how are you feeling now, are you feeling better?
- M: I feel well already, because since I left it on the Lord I feel free, I don't tell them anything, I don't want problems.
- R: And then you don't feel angry anymore.
- M: What I do, when I feel sort of slightly angry, is to pray the Lord to take, take away the demon, because I don't want that, that I may feel gladness, then, I'm not angry any more.

- R: Isn't it true that, when you sat on the stair steps to cry, it was that you missed your family?
- M: It was sort of sentimental; as I tell you, I tell nobody what I feel. He (Carlos) would say, "What happens?" "Nothing", I answered, and I sat down and wept, and I wept, and wept. I felt that I wanted to talk with my family; that came to my mind and the tears ran". And he said, "I haven't done anything to you! Tell me, do you feel sick?" "No", I answered him. "And what is bad?" "My family", I said, but when ... (unintelligible), I told him.
- R: Now you start praying and it helps a good deal.
- M: It does, it takes me away from it, because I ask the Lord to take it away from me, that I don't want to feel so anymore. See, when my sister-in-law read the letter today, she said, "Mrs. (name withheld), is in mourning". I felt as if I had been thrust down ...
- R: Something inside you dropped ...
- M: And lifted me. Then what I did, you saw what I did, I got up.
- R: And went upstairs, and later came back.
- M: I went upstairs. I felt something, don't you see, I became so ...?
- R: Yes, you told about it.
- M: It was like choking, because I can't, it is sort of a sentiment, it is something ... Maybe it is because of what occurred in my family and I have stored a lot here (pointing to the chest).
- R: A lot stored up.
- M: Yes. Then, when my dad died, I remained ... Say, when an uncle of mine died ... (the thought was not finished).
- R: How did you feel, what was it? You felt airless?
- M: Aha, it is like feeling airless, with nothing.



R: Everything turns black?

M: Everything.

R: You don't remember anything?

M: Nothing, nothing.

R: Do you swoon?

M: Yes. That is, nervous. When we took the walk today I was saying, "But I don't understand why my father-in-law doesn't receive the letters". Did you notice I told you?

R: It caused much worry in you, didn't it?

M: You bet, and I don't know how it will (unintelligible). It was something I didn't like. I just wanted to be back in the house but then I wanted to be out. But since I received the baptism, the mirth of the Lord, and I see that He helps me to be strong, I feel well, complete, I laugh, I sleep. But it was not so before.

NOTE FROM THE RESEARCHER: The conversation now shifted to her years in El Salvador when dating her husband.

There it was also the same, because a girl that was much in love with him, and I was already married to him, showed up with her mother. He told her, "Listen, I am already married", and she said, "Oh, is that so. Introduce me to her". (Unintelligible), I tried to dissimulate (unintelligible). I was well dressed, well made up ... Then the lady (the mother of the girl) stared well at me in a way ...

"Weren't you going to marry my daughter?", she asked him. "I never promised anything", he said. Well, he, sort of irresponsible. The daughter sort of flirting, to make me jealous, angry. And I felt so angry! I fixed dinner, I waited on them at the table and everything. There I didn't feel any anger, nothing for her, but what I did was to leave my husband there in the living room and went to my room to iron some clothes. Then I told myself, "I'm so angry, I'm going to leave him, I don't care!" And he comes in looking for me, "Are you hurt?" "What for?", I reply and to myself, "I will dissimulate. I'm not going to suffer for what he does". And the girl, "When will you come to my home?", and so forth. And the lady starts to say, "What about her? From what family is she?" She must have been thinking I came from a lowly family.



That was one instance. On another my husband comes in and tells: "Tere, a girlfriend, sends greetings and wants you to go and visit her". Simply like that, already married to me and already wanting to go to the gal's place. He asked me: "Is it true you told her that you were to be my wife?"

(Unintelligible).

Well dressed, I went. And her brothers kept staring at me and went to tell her, "Tere, see that he and his wife are here". Because I had gained weight, was dressed in matched shirt and shoes to draw their attention and see what they said. And I told the brothers, "What do you see in me?" And the girl asked, "How is she?" "Well, she is blond". My hair was sort of clear not as it is now. It was like the gentleman's who was just visiting here. And I told them, "What is the matter?"

(Unintelligible).

And the lady (mother of Tere) started talking with the one whose husband died (the one heard about in the letter), "Who is she?". "She is a nurse", says my friend the lady. "And who is her family?" "I don't know them". Then the girl (Tere) said to the lady, "Oh, I would have been his wife!" "And why didn't you marry him?", the lady asked. "Oh, my family didn't like him. But she is a very good girl, it is alright". I was really mad.

(Unintelligible).

R: And are you still angry about that?

M: No, not anymore.

R: It does not bother you?

M: No, not anymore.

NOTE FROM THE RESEARCHER: The following part of the transcription had many unintelligible passages.

M: He is very warm with me.

(Unintelligible).

He is crazy, he wants the best for me and he wants I don't know what.

(Unintelligible).

I have been too tolerant with him.

R: In what sense have you been tolerant?

M: When we were dating, in many ways. He would come drunk to knock at my door so I would open. He came from the house of the other girl he visited. I would ask him, "Where are you coming from?" "I was just walking around", he said.

(Unintelligible).

I would see it, but my love for him made me see no wrong in him.

(Unintelligible).

"Nobody", he used to say, "I don't have anybody".  
I was his follie. When we got married things got better.

R: Things have changed for the better now.

M: Yes.

R: What is the reason? The experience of having had to leave the homeland?

M: No, those were things of God already. What has occurred we owe to Him. But his mother knew him well and she was almost a hundred percent sure that he would not ask me to come over to the United States, because she knew what her son was like.

R: So, while you were alone in El Salvador, sometimes your mother-in-law would let you know that she thought you were not coming to the United States?

M: Yes. "Study", she used to say.

R: That was more anguish for you.

M: It was very sad. It's the same one way or another, I used to say, I don't care.

R: You said it but you didn't mean it.

M: Yes. But my hope was that if he didn't ask me to come over, I would study.

(Unintelligible).

"No", my mother-in-law used to tell me, "he loves you" when she saw I was sad. "He loves you".

R: So when you knew about him, was it by means of a letter, or by phone?

M: I received a letter. It had been a month without any. During that month the only thing I did was brood. I would be studying and mutter, "I don't understand you". I would talk to the book.

(Unintelligible).

Another sister-in-law would come to the house I would tell her that I didn't receive any letter. She would say, "Oh, it may be he is coming back. Probably he is on his way home. Who knows." It was very sad.

R: And you didn't say anything, you kept your feelings to yourself?

M: I stood fast. Oh, that month of May! ... There was no letter. A friend would tell me: "He has another woman".

R: That would make you even more mad.

M: Why didn't this friend give me some advise?

R: That would make you feel worse, of course. And when you received that letter, what happened, what did you do, what did you feel when you received it?

M: Oh, happiness! Everything had been so sad there! I got on my feet and cried. I used to say, "Oh, Lord, make him change".

(Unintelligible).

My mother-in-law would tell me that I couldn't be like that. "Take a walk". "No". I would say, "because people may tell him".

Maybe some friend of his would write to him and tell that I was loafing around and I didn't trust anybody. My mother would get mad. "You never go out. Is that what you wanted?" "Mother, but what can I do?" Then she would say, "OK". I said, "I have no news from him". She said I was too skinny.

R: Thinner than now?

M: Yes, when I arrived here I was weighing around 70 pounds, down from the 130 that I weighed in El Salvador.

R: In six months you lost all that weight?

M: Yes. After arriving here I got back to 104 pounds.

R: And now you have lost weight with your pregnancy?

M: I have, but the doctor tells me that I shouldn't worry that I will gain weight because I am eating and I take vitamins and the worst part is over already. "You will gain weight", he says.

(Unintelligible).

I felt as if I didn't want to walk anymore, I just wanted to be in bed. He would get back from work and I didn't want him to be back because a man can feel deceived if he sees his wife like that. And I would feel embarrassed with him.

(Unintelligible).

In the letters all he did was cry.

(Unintelligible).

"I know he cries for me", I used to say.

R: Of course he would cry for you. When I called him during the summer, do you think he wasn't suffering? I remember very well the anguish he went through. He would talk to me and tell me, "I don't know when she is coming, I don't know when she is coming. I don't know what else to do".

NOTE FROM THE RESEARCHER: The following is a shorthand transcription of the last half hour of the interview.

Many had thought that she married pregnant, particularly because of her gain in weight. People gossiped and even the immediate relatives reproached her, asking her how could she have done such a thing. She consistently denied all, but was not believed. For four years she had been going with Carlos, and the neighbors were sure that they had been living together. She declared: "Nothing was true". Apparently, her mother-in-law was the only person that believed her and against all the reproaches she would answer: "Not true; not true". The problem was a source of considerable stress for Marta; she described the time as an agony, and was always wishing to go away because she "felt asphixiated".

When finally the husband sent for her, the mother-in-law said, "Deep inside, my son is of a kind heart; he has never loved any other girl, for no other one but you has he had eyes. Thank the Lord that he has changed so much". Many things contributed to make that time very difficult for the wife, she says. "There were too many things, many things at the same time, that made me wish to get away. The pressure was heavy. Life was very sad for me".

Their relations have improved, at least she states feeling happier with him now than when they were dating. However, he still



has a disposition that can be a source of friction. For example, he can be a jealous person. She told about the occasion when she tried to take a picture of a boy using a camera her husband had given her. They were all in a group and she spontaneously took a shot of the boy. When the husband saw it, he felt so angry that he grasped at the camera, took the roll of film out, tore it and threw it away. He was also strict with his sister and did not like her going out with her girl friends. He also disliked her using make-up. "He is too tough on his sister", she said.

As to communicating with her own family, she stated that she had no news. Neither her mother nor siblings had written, she knew nothing of them, which made her suffer. "When we leave for Canada", she said, "my husband will be the only one at my side for support and nobody else". Several times she acknowledged feeling homesick, missing the sights, and even expressed a desire to return to her country.

On occasions she felt bored, but then she read in bed. When asked about any feelings of being out of place by having to depend on others, she expressed that she did not feel upset at not being free to do things her own way and lacking her own house. "The landlady is very kind" and when going out she would tell her: "You stay as if owner of the house". In some instances she had wished to have her own place, but realized that could not be for the moment. For that reason she did not "worry much; I do not think much about it".

About language and how long it was taking her to learn English, she said she understood it fairly well, the problem was speaking. She read well, but it was when speaking that she had trouble. However, she said she liked English. She practiced a good deal with the landlady. The landlady would ask: "How do you say this in Spanish?", showing her. Then Marta in turn asked how it was said in English. Thus they had slowly learned many terms.

NOTE FROM THE RESEARCHER: The following is a partial account of the conversation held with Carlos and Sara by the researcher's companion, a 20 year old college student. Although the validity of this approach may be questionable, the researcher is of the opinion that there is some merit in what was said.

The companion reported:

We were watching a TV show with girls dressed very sexy, very provocative and Sara asked if I would like to be like those girls. I said, "No; I believe that the woman should not provoke men", adding that upon arriving in the States some persons used to tell me when I tried to explain customs in my country, that these were silly ideas. They believed that my culture should not be so conservative. For them a girl persisting with such ideas would stay a spinster. Carlos was of the opinion that Americans were living "sort of too fast".

After discussing why a woman should not be provocative, both Carlos and Sara admitted that it was a shock when they arrived in the United States. Particularly Sara had been alarmed at the incidence of abortion in the city. She belonged to a Baptist group that had staged a protest at an abortion center and onlookers had reacted

against them. The husband was of the opinion that a woman having a child should do it conscientiously and care for the child, that the child was not to blame. "For that is having consciousness, and if not prepared, do not do it".

Carlos also commented on how he felt about the landlords. Since he felt at odds seeing people with conservative ideas in the United States, he felt more identified with the landlords. They had told him that all their children had married as ordered by God, without having intimate relations out of wedlock, as stated in the Bible.

The refugees insisted on another interview before leaving for Canada two weeks hence. However, it was not conducted, and in its place there was a telephone conversation of which excerpts appear in the following Appendix.

## Appendix F

Telephone Conversation: November 24, 1984

Carlos commented about the landlords and their support. "They will leave deep memories in us", he said. His voice seemed more at ease.

At work he had been well treated, on occasions his superior giving him responsibilities, because he was trusted; at times he was even allowed to direct activities. It had been his only job in the United States. Because of this he had been able to meet medical expenses. His job had allowed his wife's visits to the physician, which had been frequent.

As a farewell, he promised to write once he was in Canada.

The following letter, dated January 14, 1985, was received from Edmonton, Canada:

Edmonton  
January 14, 1985.

Remembered friend:

I hope the present will make you glad. See, I had not written because of many activities: renting a house, where to start studying, getting my Social Security, take the wife to the doctor, etc. You can imagine.

Well, I hope your studies have been successful. Have you visited your parents? Well, I imagine it is a great privilege to be able to visit the parents, even if once a year.

I must tell I am happy because I have with me some of my family and I am already a resident of this country and have received much



help. I must tell that on February 4th, I start taking intensive English at Alberta University, along with my sister. My wife was not accepted because of her condition, but after having the child, she will start on it; first of all, God. I must tell that I left Kansas City on December 15th and arrived here the same day. I believe you have realized how an immigrant suffers when he is rejected, but at times he is received with open arms. You have also noticed that not all persons realize their own needs. One thing you have seen and maybe not given much importance to is that an immigrant brings with him only the Mercy and Protection of our Heavenly Father. Well, you have realized that when a person prays to God, he has the power of overcoming great obstacles with the victory of Christ. In this humble message I thank you for having shared some of my suffering. I hope we keep in communication.

My sister and my wife remember you and send many greetings. Greetings to your friend companion, too.

Your friend,

Carlos

SALVADORAN REFUGEES:  
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by

VILMA L. MALDONADO-MOLL

B.Ed., University of Costa Rica, 1982

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AN ABSTRACT OF A MASTER'S THESIS

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## Abstract

In recent years, there has been a dramatic increase in the number of refugees migrating to the United States from Central America. In particular, political upheaval in El Salvador has led several thousand persons to seek refuge in the United States. In response to this mass migratory movement, the United States Refugee Act of 1980 instituted stricter standards for granting asylum to refugees from El Salvador; namely, clear evidence of political persecution must be provided. Hence, those immigrants failing to meet this criterion, in addition to many who enter the United States solely for economic or social reasons, are designated "illegal aliens" by the Immigration and Naturalization Service. To date, little systematically-derived information exists about the social, psychological, economic, and cultural stress affecting the quality of life of this often-ignored segment of the refugee population. Also, little is known about the way in which refugees cope with such stressors.

This investigation used a case study approach to explore nine stress domains which might affect the physical, social, and psychological well-being of two illegal refugees from El Salvador. Derived largely from the empirical literature, these stress domains are: separation from relatives; changes in family roles; underemployment/unemployment; discrimination; knowledge of the English language; cultural differences; uncertainty about the future; fear of

arrest and deportation; and feelings of dependency. In addition, an attempt was made to identify psychological and behavioral coping mechanisms utilized by respondents to adapt more effectively with these stressors. Open- and closed-ended interview items were developed to elicit responses in each area. Respondents were a young married couple (husband, 20 years-old; wife, 19 years-old) residing with a sheltering family through the help of a sponsoring religious organization in a large Midwestern city. Two face-to-face focused interviews (with follow-up telephone conversations) were employed. Both respondents were present during the interviews.

Qualitative analysis of the interview responses was conducted by the author. Respondents' own language was used to summarize major findings for each of the nine stress areas. Two additional stress areas (difficulties communicating with country of origin and lack of transportation) emerged from the interviews and are discussed. Briefly, uncertainty regarding the future, fear of arrest and deportation, and underemployment/unemployment were major stressors for the male respondent. Major stress areas for the female respondent were separation from relatives, cultural differences, and feelings of dependency. Coping strategies associated with each stress area are discussed. Overall, religious faith, preservation of cultural traditions, and maintenance of nostalgic memories were major coping mechanisms utilized by the couple. Implications of the findings for applied professionals (family life educators, social workers, and

psychologists) and community members (sponsors, sheltering families, individual volunteers, civic groups, university faculty and students) are discussed.



